

Preparing for Brexit top issue for 4000 farmers at roadshow events

Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths, said the positive feedback from the 4,000 plus farmers who attended one of Farming Connect's 'Farming for the future' roadshow events showed how important it was to speak to farmers on the ground about the future of their industry.

Lesley Griffiths said:

"There is a lot of uncertainty for agriculture as we transition from the EU and I am keen to support farmers to become as resilient as they can to any changes that are to come. These events have been an excellent way of communicating with the industry and to highlight the support I have made available through Farming Connect and the Farm Business Grant."

Eirwen Williams, director of rural programmes with Menter a Busnes, which delivers Farming Connect on behalf of the Welsh Government, said the regional campaign had a fantastic response, with capacity audiences at each event already resulting in an increased number of enquiries and applications for services.

"The support mechanisms provided by Farming Connect provide the appropriate support which can improve both technical and business performance to help ensure long term financial viability at this critical time."

Attendance at a 'Farming for the Future' event allows farmers access to the technical advice now available through the Advisory Service without the need for a business plan. It also enables Welsh farmers to apply for a Farm Business Grant (FBG) which provides one-off grants of between £3,000 and £12,000. The first window will close on 30 June with another due to open in August. Additional events arranged by Farming Connect will be scheduled this summer to enable more farmers to attend.

Platform speakers at each event included representatives from Welsh Government as well as leading agricultural business and financial experts. The line-up also included a number of farmers who had driven forward their businesses with support from Farming Connect.

Wendy Jenkins, director of rural consultancy CARA, was a speaker at a number of the events.

"These events made it clear that alongside any financial

incentives, every business must take matters into their own hands now to ensure they achieve optimum levels of technical and business performance and make best use of resources in all those areas they can and must control.

“Making small improvements in a number of key performance indicator areas can reap significant rewards longer term, and the whole raft of services provided by Farming Connect can contribute greatly towards this,”

said Ms Jenkins.

The Cabinet Secretary said in the coming months she would continue to urge all farmers in Wales to consider their long term business objectives, to access the services of Farming Connect and to consider applying for a Farming Business Grant to help them achieve these.

“It is essential to ensure your business is prepared and in the best possible position for the future. There has never been a more important time to find out what is available to you and to make best use of all support and guidance.”

Following his attendance at the Farming Connect roadshow event at the Royal Welsh Showground, Lloyd Powell, a young farmer who farms with his family at Glanmiheli, Newtown, said:

“I left the meeting with a greater understanding of what my family can do to prepare our farm business for Brexit. We are already tapping into a number of Farming Connect services which have helped us make better use of our soil and crops. Nutrient management planning proved hugely beneficial and has resulted in considerable financial savings by reducing fertiliser costs and improving the quality of our grassland.”

[Children in Cwm get off to a flying start](#)

The Cwm Flying Start Hub has received £845,000 of capital funding from the Welsh Government. The centre provides quality childcare for parents of all eligible two to three year olds for two and a half hours a day, five days a week.

During the visit Carl Sargeant thanked the Flying Start team for their determination, commitment and hard work in delivering this project.

Carl Sargeant said:

“I’ve had the privilege of visiting many Flying Start settings around Wales and seen first-hand the wonderful work being undertaken by Local Authorities, the Local Health Boards, schools, the voluntary sector, families and communities.

“Flying Start continues to improve the lives of children and families living in some of our most disadvantaged communities across Wales. Local Authorities have benefitted from over £76 million in revenue funding during the last financial year (2016/2017).

“Last year over 38,000 children and their families were supported through the programme, achieving the previous Government’s commitment to double the number of children benefitting from the programme.

“My thanks go to everyone involved in getting this project in Cwm off the ground and I wish everybody involved with the new Flying Start Hub every success in the future.”

Plans to curb zero-hours contracts in social care unveiled

Under proposals being put out to consultation today, employers will need to offer workers in the domiciliary care sector on zero-hours contracts the choice of moving to a minimum hours contract after three months of continued employment, if there is ongoing demand for the work.

Measures to tackle ‘call-clipping’ have also been announced. The proposals would require providers of domiciliary care to differentiate clearly between travel time and care time when preparing employees’ schedules, giving due regard to issues such as the distance between visits and rush hour traffic. This would help to ensure that care time – and therefore the quality of care – is not eroded.

Social Services Minister, Rebecca Evans, said:

“While some staff prefer zero-hours contracts, valuing the flexibility they can offer, for many the uncertainty and insecurity they pose can have a hugely detrimental impact on their lives.

Crucially the plans we are putting out to consultation today will ensure employees have a choice. After three months of employment, they will be able to choose whether to move onto another zero-hours contract, or take up alternative contractual arrangements.

“The proposals I have unveiled today are not only intended to offer staff a fairer deal, but also to safeguard the quality of care and support people receive in their own homes. Research shows a link between the prevalence of zero-hours contracts and a reduced quality of care, due to issues around the continuity of care and communication between workers and those they support.

“Requiring providers to distinguish clearly between travel time and care time when arranging services, will also improve the experience of people needing care. Doing so will help tackle ‘call-clipping’, ensuring people’s care and support time is not eroded by travel time between visits.

“I encourage anybody with a view on these important issues to contribute to our consultation.”

The consultation is available on the Welsh Government’s website and will run for eight weeks, until 7 August 2017.

[Kirsty Williams calls for schools to take part in the Great Get Together](#)

Inspired by MP Jo Cox, who was tragically murdered last year, The Great Get Together aims to bring together communities, neighbours, pupils and friends to share and celebrate all that we hold in common.

The Welsh Government has written to all schools in the country to highlight this year’s event, which takes place between 16th to the 18th June, and encouraging them to take part.

Kirsty Williams said:

“Jo Cox spent a lot of time in schools and truly believed in the importance of inspiring younger generations to be good citizens in their communities. From the tragedy of her death The Great Get Together was created to bring all of us together to celebrate what we all share and hold in common, not what divides us.

“On the weekend of the 16th-18th June, The Great Get Together will be taking place across the country, and I’m adding my support by

asking schools to take part with a special assembly on Friday 16th June. We will be publishing material that will help schools to get involved.

“I am looking forward to working with schools to make The Great Get Together a moment of unity that inspires pupils to celebrate all they hold in common. I believe there is a groundswell of people who reject divisive politics and simply want to bring our communities together and celebrate all that unites us. This is our chance.”

Schools can register their interest and find out more on The Great Get Together website about the thousands of activities taking place across the country, ranging from street parties to BBQs, dog shows to scarecrow festivals, bake-offs to multi-faith Iftars to break the Ramadan fast.

[Quarantine Units to be postponed until September](#)

Lesley Griffiths has decided to delay the introduction of Quarantine Units (QUs) from Monday 12th June to Monday 11th September following representations by farming unions and other livestock industry representatives on behalf of livestock keepers wishing to attend agricultural shows this summer.

The delay means livestock keepers are able to attend agricultural shows using their existing Isolation Facilities without the obligation to meet the full requirements of the six day standstill regime. It also allows them more time to put in place QUs on their holdings.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“Following discussions with key farming and stakeholder organisations over recent days I have decided isolation facilities may continue to be used by livestock keepers for agricultural shows and those wanting to move animals for breeding purposes, until 11 September 2017, when the new legislation on Quarantine Units will come into force.

“I am sure this approach will be of benefit to the agriculture summer shows and to livestock keepers who wish to display their animals at these important rural events.”

More information on Quarantine Units can be found [here](#).