

[5.1-magnitude earthquake hits SW China: CENC](#)

A 5.1-magnitude earthquake jolted Yangbi County in southwest China's Yunnan Province at 7:55 a.m. Monday, according to the measurement of the China Earthquake Networks Center (CENC).

The epicenter, with a depth of about 12 km, was monitored at 25.89 degrees north latitude and 99.8 degrees east longitude.

[BCC: Action needed on poor broadband, especially in rural areas and for small firms](#)

Today the BCC launches results from a digital survey on broadband connectivity for businesses in the UK.

27th March 2017

Businesses across the UK, particularly in rural areas, are still without reliable broadband connections, despite companies saying the availability of fully functional broadband is extremely important to their operations, according to the results of a survey released today (Monday) by the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC).

All companies surveyed (99%) say a reliable broadband connection is important, (82% say extremely so), yet nearly one in five (18%) suffer from unreliable connections (11% not very reliable; 7% not at all reliable).

The findings also show that firms in rural areas are at least twice as likely to have unreliable connections (30%) as those in towns (15%), inner cities (13%), and suburban areas (12%).

Smaller businesses are the most likely to suffer from unreliable broadband, with nearly a quarter (24%) of sole traders and 21% of micro-businesses reporting problems.

The survey suggests that more reliable connections would allow businesses to do more. Nearly half of businesses (48%) say if the reliability of their broadband connection was improved it would allow them to use more applications, particularly cloud-based services (24%), transfer of large

files (22%), remote server access for employees (15%).

Dr Adam Marshall, Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce, said:

“Business communities across the UK still report that our digital infrastructure is not fit for purpose. Throughout the country, significant numbers of companies of every size and sector lack reliable internet connectivity – a basic requirement for businesses to operate efficiently in today’s world.

“Unreliable connections stunt productivity, causing needless delays, costs and frustration. While businesses in every corner of the UK are affected, our research shows that it’s rural areas and small businesses that are most likely to suffer. An unreliable connection acts as an obstacle to growth, and puts those firms most in need of support at a competitive disadvantage.

“We’ve been calling on both providers and on government for years to fund the necessary upgrades required to deliver superfast broadband to business communities. Regulators, too, must ensure that firms actually get the quality and speeds of connection they are promised. While we welcome recent ministerial announcements about investing in 5G technology and efforts to build a world-class digital infrastructure in the UK, there is still a long way to go in getting the basics right. The immediate focus must be on providing all companies with connections that are reliable and of sufficient speed, which would boost business confidence and encourage firms to maximise opportunities for growth, trade and investment.”

Ends

Notes to editors:

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) surveyed 1,465 business people from all regions of the UK online in January 2017 to understand how businesses rate the overall reliability of their broadband connections, and how a more reliable connection could help their businesses. Of the businesses surveyed, 96% were SMEs, 22% operate in the manufacturing sector, and 78% operate in the services sector.

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) sits at the heart of a powerful network of 52 Accredited Chambers of Commerce across the UK, representing thousands of businesses of all sizes and within all sectors. Our Global Business Network connects exporters with nearly 40 markets around the world. For more information, visit: www.britishchambers.org.uk

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Press release: First-time buyers relying on parents to get onto housing ladder

[unable to retrieve full-text content]Research shows a rise in 'bank of mum and dad' helping their children onto the housing ladder.

Increase in funding to help Wales' most disadvantaged pupils – Kirsty Williams

The Cabinet Secretary has also announced that the Pupil Deprivation Grant will be renamed the Pupil Development Grant (PDG).

The Welsh Government is to invest over £90m through the Pupil Development Grant over the next financial year to help disadvantaged pupils in Welsh schools.

Extending the PDG was a key part of the progressive agreement between the First Minister and Kirsty Williams.

The Education Secretary has revealed significant expansions to the programme, from the amount allocated to the youngest pupils, to extending the funding to pupils not educated at school, to providing more support to children who are looked after by their local authority.

The changes, which come into affect in April, include:

- Doubling the grant to £600 per eligible child in nursery and reception classes.
- Extending support to all three year old looked after children. The funding can also be used to support previously looked after children who have been adopted.
- Extending the support to pupils whose education happens outside a school setting. Currently only those from pupil referral units received the support.

Kirsty Williams said:

“It remains our national mission that every child has the opportunity to succeed.

“I am pleased that this grant is having a significant impact in breaking the link between poverty and attainment that has dogged our education system. However, there is more to do, which is why we are extending the grant to ensure every child has a fair start in life.

“I am also announcing a small but significant change in the name of the grant. Not only does this reflect the excellent practice that already exists across Wales, but this more positive name will better emphasise learner progression alongside reducing the attainment gap.”

Extra £7 million for innovative all-Wales autism service

Today’s announcement brings the total amount of funding allocated to supporting autism services in Wales to £13 million up to 2021.

Wales is the first part of the UK to create a national service to provide lifetime support to children and adults with autism, and their families. The innovative service, which will be rolled out across the country by 2018, will provide new adult diagnostic services; support for families and carers; help with transition from child to adult provision and training for professionals.

The additional £7 million funding announced over four years (2017/18 – 2020/21) will ensure all regions in Wales are able to provide consistent, high quality, and sustainable autism support.

Minister for Social Service and Public Health, Rebecca Evans, said:

“Wales has long been a leader in providing support for people with autism and their families, publishing our first action plan back in 2008. The National Integrated Autism Service is another important step forward. It will help ensure people receive consistent services and get the right support, at the right time, wherever they live in Wales.

“The additional funding I have announced today, at the start of National Autism Week, demonstrates our continued commitment to

improving autism services. I am confident that the four year funding will enable regions to deliver sustainable support to families.”

The funding will also help deliver the Welsh Government’s Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Strategic Action Plan. This includes a commitment to developing improved autism resources, such as the new scheme developed by the WLGA, “Can you see me?” which is to be rolled out in the coming months.

The initiative promotes understanding and acceptance of autism within communities in Wales. It is launched today with a video showing support from sporting stars from Wales’ national football and rugby squads.

Leaflets and posters for outlets such as shops, banks, hairdressers and cinemas as well as dentists and GPs have been created to support interactions with people with autism. People with autism can also choose whether they would like to make others aware of their autism by wearing a wristband or showing a card (which will also be available for mobile phones).

Steve Thomas CBE, Chief Executive of the WLGA, said:

“This scheme, which has been led by the National ASD Development Team within the WLGA, will be a significant step in terms of recognising the needs of individuals with ASD across communities in Wales. I am delighted that local authorities will take this forward and play a key role in promoting it. The WLGA warmly welcome the extra funding that has been announced by the Minister, which will help us deepen our work with individuals with ASD, their family and carers, and professionals working with children and adults with ASD.”