

## Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales re-appoint existing members to the Commission

Alun Davies said:

“I am pleased to announce the re-appointment of Theodore Joloza and Julie May.

“These re-appointments will ensure there are the necessary skills and expertise in the Commission as it continues to keep under review all local government areas in Wales, and the electoral arrangements of principal councils, and to make proposals to Welsh Government, which are considered desirable in the interests of effective and convenient local government.

“Mr Joloza and Mrs May will continue to bring valuable experience to the roles.”

The re-appointments have been made in accordance with the Governance Code for Public Appointments and will commence on 1st September 2018 for a three year term.

As members Mr Joloza and Mrs May are paid a daily fee of £198 with a time commitment of 2-3 days per month.

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## Finance Secretary announces extra £17m EU funds to help young people in South East Wales unlock their career potential

Inspire2Achieve, led by Blaenau Gwent and Newport Councils, will receive an extra £15.9m of EU funding to work with schools and colleges to provide support to young people aged 11-19 years who are at risk of falling out of education and training.

Newport Council's Inspire2Work will receive a further £1.46m of EU funding to provide one-to-one mentoring, help with basic and personal skills and digital

literacy, so young people aged 16-24 years can gain qualifications, enter further education and secure employment.

The new investment builds on the £19m of EU funding previously awarded to the schemes, which have already supported over 4,000 young people. Together with the additional funding, the schemes will support 15,000 more individuals over the next four years.

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Mark Drakeford said:

“It is essential we support our young people to achieve a brighter and more prosperous future. The additional EU funding will help young people address barriers to their education and give them the targeted support they need to access employment. It will build on the successful achievements of EU funds so far, which have already helped almost 40,000 young people across Wales to improve their chances of employment success.”

Councillor Dai Davies, Executive Member for Regeneration at Blaenau Gwent Council added:

“We fully welcome this additional EU funding for the Inspire2Achieve project which will support more young people across the South East Wales region to fully achieve their potential. “We have been privileged to work in partnership with Newport on this important project which supports young people in the area who feel disengaged from mainstream education and face barriers to learning. We look forward to continuing this very important work so all of our young people, regardless of circumstance, are given the opportunity to gain employment and lead economically active lives.”

Councillor Gail Giles, Newport City Council’s Cabinet Member for education and skills, said:

“As a council, we have already made significant progress in reducing the numbers of year 11 young people who are not in education, employment or training, from 4.7 per cent in 2014 to 1.3 per cent in 2017. This extra funding will mean we can help even more young people who are at risk of missing vital educational or training opportunities achieve their potential.”

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# GCSE pupils congratulated by Kirsty Williams

In the second year of reform of GCSEs in Wales, results also show an increase of 50% in the number of entries for Science – ensuring that a far greater number of young people have the higher level skills needed to drive Wales' future economy. This reflects a change in entry patterns in schools and a move away from significant entries for vocational science qualifications.

Individual sciences (Biology, Chemistry, Physics) entries are up by over 10% and the number of pupils gaining A\*-C in these sciences has also risen. A\*-C outcomes remain stable with 9 in 10 achieving these results.

Visiting West Monmouth School in Pontypool, Kirsty Williams said:

“I want to congratulate pupils who are receiving their results today and to thank the teachers who worked so tirelessly to deliver these new qualifications.

“Today marks a culture change for Science in Wales. Entries are up by 50%, with more pupils gaining A\*-C and more achieving the very top grades in Biology, Chemistry and Physics. This shows the importance that both we and schools attach to this subject and I am confident that together we will continue to go from strength to strength, as we saw with last week's A Level results.”

Last year the Education Secretary announced measures to discourage schools from entering thousands of pupils too early unless they were ready. This is borne out by this year's results showing an overall decrease in the number of students entered before they have completed their full programme of study – otherwise known as early entry.

These pupils were entered early either last summer or in November and did not return to sit the exam again this summer. However, while numbers have fallen, early entry has still had a significant impact on some subjects.

Different and early entry patterns have had an effect on subjects such as English. As made clear by JCQ, the most accurate picture of attainment is 16 year olds irrespective of when they sat the exam, whether that's last summer, November or this summer. This shows an English Language A\*-C rate of 63.3%.

“Today's results are, of course, only one part of a picture that will be pieced together in the autumn”, the Education Secretary continued.

“Early entry has had an impact on some of these results and that's why the final picture will change. You only have to look at

previous years where the autumn results have been several percentage points higher than the data published in the summer.”

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## **First Minister responds to UK Government's 'no deal' plans**

Responding to the UK Government's 'no deal' plans, First Minister of Wales Carwyn Jones said:

“The writing is on the wall. ‘No deal’ would be a catastrophic failure of the UK Government that would cause huge disruption and serious, long-lasting economic and social damage to all parts of the UK.

“It is hugely frustrating, because if the UK Government had adopted the blueprint to negotiations we set out over 18 months ago, they could have made substantial progress on the future partnership with the EU. They also could have avoided the situation we face today where our biggest employers are considering leaving the UK with the loss of thousands of jobs causing disruption to our economy, our universities are at risk of losing out on vital research and our hospitals are warning of staff shortages putting patients at risk.

“‘No deal’ is not an option and the UK Government's bluff is fooling no-one. It is time the Prime Minister dropped the poker face and worked constructively with the EU-27 to secure a Brexit deal that protects our citizens, services and economy.”

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## **Funding support for farm businesses announced by Lesley Griffiths**

The Cabinet Secretary also announced the Welsh Government would be making a donation of £500,000 to farming charities to help provide short-term support to those families in Wales who are least able to meet living costs.

Lesley Griffiths said:

“In response to the period of exceptionally hot and dry weather earlier this summer, I brought together a range of stakeholders at the Royal Welsh Agriculture Show to discuss the action Government and the industry might take collectively to mitigate the issues farmers are facing.

Whilst the weather and immediate forage situation has improved, I remain concerned about the medium and longer term cost and fodder availability implications for farm businesses. In recognition of the current exceptional circumstances, I have taken the decision to make available a loan facility to farm businesses later this year.

European regulations set the payment window for BPS from 1 December to 30 June, and based on Wales’ excellent payment performance, I expect approximately 90% of farm businesses in Wales to receive their BPS payments on day one. To ensure parity between claimants, I will also introduce a loan facility for the remaining approximate 10% of farm businesses where the BPS claims are yet to be validated and therefore cannot be paid under European regulations.”

The Cabinet Secretary added:

“I am conscious the Farming Unions have been calling for us to bring forward the BPS 2018 payments. I have decided this would not be particularly helpful as making advance payments in October will not resolve the immediate or longer term implications of the exceptional weather conditions and it would create an unfortunate disparity between businesses in terms of some receiving BPS payments while others would not.

The Farming Unions themselves recognise this position would be unfair and create further problems. Therefore, the introduction of a loan scheme is a better and fairer solution to the difficult circumstances affecting farm businesses this year.

In the short term, I am acutely aware of the human impact on farming families. I have therefore asked my officials to work closely with the agricultural charities, to decide how best we can support their work. In order to help address immediate financial difficulties, we will be making a donation of £500,000 to help provide short-term support to those families in Wales who are least able to meet living costs.

Making these decisions now will provide farm businesses with assurance and the knowledge they need to help manage their immediate cash flow and plan their finances in the longer term, especially through the forthcoming winter.”