

Overnight resurfacing work to begin on A483

The original proposal from the North Wales Trunk Road Agency, scheduled to begin next week, was to run 24/7 contraflow between J5 (Mold Road) and J6 (Gresford), with associated slip road closures, over a 6 to 8 week period – allowing for much needed resurfacing work to protect the road in the longer term. Having considered the concerns of the local community and the local authority, however, the Economy Secretary has determined that disruption would be too great and that a less disruptive, medium term solution should be pursued.

Seven day-a-week work on overnight resurfacing, which will protect the road in the medium term whilst allowing traffic to flow as normal during the day, will now take place. Local residents should be aware that both the work and diversion will see an increase in the usual noise levels. Affected residents will be provided with details and every effort will be made to keep the impact to a minimum.

Ken Skates said:

“Closing roads for long periods at peak times is never ideal for the economy but is often the only option in terms of delivering the quality infrastructure we need and expect.

“On this occasion, however, I’ve taken the decision to deliver more medium term improvements to the road, having considered a full closure of this road during working hours to be too detrimental local communities and the economy.

“Night work has its limitations and is not without its issues however, in this instance, I think it offers the best solution for both making the necessary improvements to the road whilst allowing road users to continue their daily routine as usual.”

The Welsh Government motorway and trunk road resurfacing programme will see over £17m spent on some 43 much needed resurfacing schemes across Wales by April. Of that over £10m is being invested in 36 schemes in North and Mid Wales.

Advance notification of road closures and diversions will be well signposted and scheme details/updates will be posted on www.traffic-wales.com (external link).

Proposed changes to supply teaching in Wales published

The Welsh Government established the Ministerial Supply Model Taskforce in June 2016 to consider issues around supply teachers. They considered the complexities and variations in how supply teachers are employed.

Their report offers a range of recommendations, including considering cost efficiencies, highlighting safeguarding responsibilities, accurate data collection, proposals for pay and conditions, and supporting newly qualified teachers and professional learning opportunities.

Recommendations include:

- Improving the data collected on supply teachers so it is more accurate.
- Undertake a full cost analysis to measure the true cost of supply teaching.
- Consider the terms and conditions of supply teachers as part of broader proposals to devolve teachers' pay and conditions to Wales.
- Raise awareness with employers to the responsibilities placed upon them in relation to safeguarding and update workforce guidance.
- Consider regulating the quality of commercial supply agencies by introducing a set of accredited minimum quality standards that all commercial agencies providing teachers to maintained schools should meet.

The Welsh Government has accepted the majority of the report's recommendations. However, further detailed policy and legal work will be carried out to establish whether all of the recommendations can be delivered, including the recommendations around quality standards and regional collaborative working.

Education Secretary Kirsty Williams said:

"Supply teachers are an important part of the teacher workforce and I want to make sure they have the opportunity for professional development and are able to support our wider education reforms.

"As the report concludes, there is clear room for improvement in the way we currently employ, manage and support the delivery of supply teachers. While I accept the report's recommendations at this time, some of them raise complex legal issues which we will need to look into further. We will now begin this process, working closely with councils, schools, the teaching workforce, unions and others.

"Any changes must fit with our national mission to raise standards and extend opportunities for all our young people."

Improving access to critical care key – Vaughan Gething

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething today outlined how the NHS is working to improve care for critically ill people in Wales. The delivery plan for the critically ill to 2020 is published today [Thursday 2 February].

Thursday 02 February 2017

Mr Gething said:

“This plan, developed by critical care specialists, sets out how the NHS will meet the needs of people who are critically ill, or are at risk of becoming critically ill. It also outlines plans to improve the early identification of patients, which is key to preventing unnecessary transfers to busy critical care units.

“We know that there is work to do to improve access to critical care in Wales and we are seeing progress; the group has identified areas where bed numbers could be increased without significant staffing increases.

“This plan has been developed by The Critical Care Trauma Network and Critically Ill Implementation Group and outlines the actions we need to take over the next three years.

“Wales faces the same challenges we see elsewhere in the UK in terms of recruitment and rising demand for critical care, and we expect health boards to collaborate and plan services on a regional basis to deliver high-quality care.

“We have seen an improvement in survival rates in recent years and also reductions in the numbers of patients who are re-admitted to critical care soon after leaving it, which is encouraging. This plan outlines how health boards can work together to build on this progress for the future.”

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[Housing and Armed Forces sectors thanked for help on Housing Pathway for Veterans](#)

The pathway aims to prevent homelessness amongst ex Service personnel and help them find suitable accommodation.

Echoing one of the eight 'asks' of Welsh Government in the Royal British Legion's 2016 Wales Manifesto – Live On – Building a better future for the Armed Forces Community in Wales.

Carl Sargeant said:

"I take very seriously the responsibility we have to those members of our communities who have served, or are still serving, in the Armed Forces. Helping them to find suitable accommodation is an important part of the much broader and wider package of support which helps them to settle back into our communities.

"We will continue our work to implement the Housing Pathway, particularly amongst organisations working on the front line of homelessness. We also aim to do more to raise awareness, with the publication of advice for veterans. This will build on the contents of the Pathway. It will be targeted at those due to be discharged from duty as well as those who were discharged at some point previously. It will include advice cards for those who are sleeping rough. The Pathway will also be shared widely amongst organisations providing support for the Armed Forces community in Wales.

"I am grateful to all the organisations who have worked with us on these developments. In collaboration with The Armed Forces Expert Group and partner organisations, we will continue to support and provide effective services for our Armed Forces community in Wales."

Antony Metcalfe, Area manager for The Royal British Legion Wales said:

“The Royal British Legion welcomes the new Housing pathway for the Armed Forces community and the commitment the Welsh Government has shown in addressing the issues around housing support for the Armed forces community in Wales.

“The Legion called for such a pathway in our Welsh Assembly election manifesto 2016, following a national conversation we held with the Armed forces community in Wales, who told us that accessing clear housing advice and support was difficult and that too often they were being given inconsistent advice which was leaving them confused about access to housing in their local areas. This document should now help provide clear information for the Armed Forces community but also be used as a training resource for housing professionals so that everyone is clear about housing support that can be expected and delivered.”

[Lesley Griffiths to hear views on Securing Wales' future](#)

Lesley Griffiths is undertaking a series of visits to businesses and organisations in South Wales whose operations are likely to be impacted by the UK's impending exit from the EU.

The Cabinet Secretary will visit the Eastern Valleys Uplands Project in Blaenavon, the Two Sisters Red Meat processing site in Merthyr Tydfil and the Food Innovation Centre in Cardiff Metropolitan University. The day will culminate in a round-table cross-sector meeting with key agriculture and environment stakeholders in Cardiff Bay.

Among the issues likely to be raised during the visits and meeting are the importance of Welsh businesses having full and unfettered access to the European Single Market and how to achieve a balanced approach to immigration, linking migration to jobs.

Also expected to be discussed are maintaining the level of funding currently delivered by the EU to Wales' farmers and continuing social and environmental protections once these are no longer guaranteed through the UK's membership of the EU.

These are key issues that were set out in Securing Wales' Future, the comprehensive Brexit White Paper published last week by the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru.

Lesley Griffiths said:

“The Environment and Rural Affairs portfolio is, probably more than any other, hugely impacted by EU funding and legislation. Wales’ thriving food and drink industry also benefits greatly from selling its produce into the EU and many are able to operate effectively by employing people from EU countries.

“The UK’s withdrawal from the EU will undoubtedly have a major impact on individuals, businesses and organisations represented by my portfolio. Since the referendum result I have been eager that those who are going to be affected the most by Brexit have regular opportunities to feed their very real views and concerns into the highest levels of government.

“Through our White Paper, jointly produced with Plaid Cymru, we have clearly set out what we believe is a sensible starting point for negotiations. We believe our position balances concerns over immigration with the economic reality that makes full and unfettered access to the single market so central to Wales’ future prosperity.

“I look forward to meeting a wide range of individuals and organisations and hearing their views on how we can deliver a Brexit that works for Wales, and for the rest of the United Kingdom.”