

“Bovine TB at ten year low, but we must work together to eliminate disease” – Wales’ Chief Veterinary Officer

Speaking at NFU Cymru’s Pembrokeshire Annual General Meeting last night, the Chief Vet highlighted the progress made, with over 95% of Wales’ herds now TB free.

The Chief Vet also pointed to the increase in cattle slaughtered and stressed that although still a cause for concern, it did not reflect a worsening situation as is often reported.

Instead, the rise is due to an increase in the use of the more sensitive gamma interferon blood test and more severe interpretation of the skin test, both of which are flagging infected cattle in herds with a history of bovine TB at an earlier stage.

This increased sensitivity of testing helps to identify infection sooner and reduces the spread of the disease. The number of cattle slaughtered is expected to fall over time as a result of this approach, and as the number of infected herds continues to reduce.

The Chief Vet also highlighted the Cabinet Secretary’s position on controlling the disease in wildlife, saying an “England-style” cull had been ruled out in Wales.

The Randomised Badger Culling Trial in England showed a net reduction of 16% of new incidents of bovine TB over nine years. In Wales, the number of new incidents recorded has reduced by 47% in eight years through application of increased testing frequency, improved biosecurity and other cattle control measures alone. However, it is recognised that in a number of long term TB breakdowns the disease picture points towards a wildlife reservoir of infection.

As a result the Cabinet Secretary has proposed a measured response to controlling the disease in wildlife in Wales. Focussing on these persistent TB breakdowns, where it can be objectively proven badgers are infected, it is proposed the infected groups of badgers are trapped and humanely killed.

The Chief Veterinary Officer reported that work has already started to develop bespoke action plans for each herd, including addressing any wildlife contribution to the problem.

Speaking at the conference, Christianne Glossop said:

“We all recognise bovine TB has a significant financial and social

impact on farm businesses and the wider rural economy. While it is encouraging to see the number of new herd incidents falling, even in our highest incidence areas, I recognise this is of little comfort to the farms currently suffering a TB breakdown. This is why we are focusing our efforts on eliminating the disease in affected herds.”

“The public consultation on our proposed Refreshed Approach to TB eradication is now closed and we welcome the responses we have received. We are committed to eradicating the disease in Wales, but we cannot do this alone. It’s encouraging NFU Cymru has welcomed the plans for a regionalised approach, as this is aimed at protecting the low incidence area while bearing down on the disease elsewhere. This will help us to build on the progress made so far as we progress towards our ambition of a TB free Wales.”

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths, is considering all response to the consultation on the Welsh Government’s refreshed Bovine TB Eradication Programme. The refreshed programme is expected to be published in the spring.

Welsh Government accepts all Talented Women for a Successful Wales report recommendations and marks the occasion with planned Royal visit

To mark the announcement the Minister has also confirmed she will be hosting a special WISE (Women in Science, Technology and Engineering) event in the Senedd, Cardiff, on 13 March, which is being attended by WISE’s patron, HRH The Princess Royal.

The event will celebrate and promote the value of women in STEM in Wales and build momentum around the report’s recommendations.

Talented Women for a Successful Wales is an independent report which the Welsh Government commissioned and published last year.

Led by Wales’ Chief Scientific Adviser, Professor Julie Williams, the report aims to tackle the critical shortage of women in STEM roles in Wales, and across the rest of the UK. It identifies the need for a sea change of attitude across society to break down existing barriers and create the

skilled workforce needed to support the future economic growth of Wales.

It includes 33 recommendations on dealing with the underrepresentation and poor retention of women in STEM in Wales through four major themes of education, recruitment, retention and promotion – all of which have been accepted by the Welsh Government.

While the majority of the recommendations are for schools, universities and STEM businesses in Wales to action with the Welsh Government advising, encouraging and facilitating where appropriate, there are two actions which are specifically for the Welsh Government to take forward:

1. The Welsh Government should make improved gender balance in STEM a theme in educational policies and programmes for teacher training, curriculum reform, careers advice, apprenticeships and further & higher education funding.
2. The Welsh Government should review its support for childcare and consider how it can further support a wider range of parents with the costs of childcare – with the long-term aim of developing an offer of high-quality early childhood care and education.

It is estimated that increasing the number of women in science across the UK could be worth £2bn to the national economy.

Skills and Science Minister, Julie James, is keen to point out that work is already underway to meet these recommendations and over recent year's the Welsh Government has increased its investment into this important area, saying:

“Science underpins innovation and technology developments and is essential for economic growth and creating high quality jobs. That is why we have already invested more than £100m in recent years to increase Wales’ research capacity and why we are supporting all of the recommendations in this report to encourage more women and girls to pursue STEM skill opportunities.

“Our ‘STEM in Education and Training: A Delivery Plan for Wales’ (2016) already outlines our commitment to improving the participation of girls in STEM and our Education Directorate has made prioritising girls’ progression in maths, physics and computing, and made gender balance in STEM education a condition of grant funding.”

The Minister added:

“While these are all positive developments we recognise more can be done to understand the issues affecting girls’ progression in STEM and how practice in schools can have a positive impact and our programme of education reform aims to address this.”

Plans are also being progressed by the Welsh Government to provide 30 hours of free early education and childcare to working parents of three and four year-olds across Wales for 48 weeks of the year. This is the most generous childcare offer in the UK, giving parents – in particular, women – more choice and a greater ability to have both a family and a career.

The Talented Women for a Successful Wales report can be found [here](#).

Over £5million investment for Morryston redevelopment work

Vaughan Gething said:

Some of the oldest parts of the hospital date from the WW2 era and others are over 30 years old. The accommodation to be demolished no longer meets modern building standards and guidance.

This funding is in addition to the £142.539m that has already been funded to improve schemes under the HealthVison Swansea programme at Morryston.

Mr Gething made the announcement on a visit to the Haemostasis Biomedical Research Unit on the site.

£5.11 million will be used to demolish obsolete buildings on the site, develop a new on-site crèche and provide new IT infrastructure at the hospital.

“This investment is part of wider modernisation plans for Morryston; it will make the site safer and create space for future healthcare developments as Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board plan for the future of healthcare on the site.”

Sian Harrop-Griffiths, Director of Strategy at Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board said:

“We are extremely pleased that Welsh Government has provided funding to support the next phase of the development of the Morryston Hospital site. This funding will enable the demolition of a large number of outdated buildings now that the services previously provided from there have been relocated in modern, fit for purpose accommodation on site.

“This will also enable space to be made available for some temporary car parking whilst the design and development of a new multi-storey car park on the site are being undertaken, and plans

for this are well advanced.”

[£85,000 to develop Deeside transport schemes as plans for North Wales Metro gather pace](#)

Flintshire Council has been awarded £85,000 to help it develop bus and active travel projects along the B5129 at Queensferry and to Deeside Industrial Park in order to improve transport links to key employment sites.

Ken Skates said the funding will also help Flintshire to strengthen its transport links in anticipation of the Welsh Government’s ambitious North Wales Metro project, which will provide wider integrated transport links across North Wales.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“Our ambitious plans for a Metro scheme in North Wales will require significant investment, with huge potential rewards for the local economy. To this end, the £50 million earmarked in our recent budget will see our plans for the North Wales Metro really take shape.

“In the meantime, I’m delighted that we are able to support local authorities, like Flintshire, in investing in improved bus access, in facilitating active travel and in linking communities with jobs – something which will be key to the success of the wider North Wales Metro.”

Councillor Bernie Attridge, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment said

“I am pleased to receive the additional funding to help develop our transport solution to improve all modes of transport into Deeside Industrial Park. Improved transport links will ensure that Deeside continues to be the destination of choice for businesses into the future.”

First Minister launches 2017 programme of events to mark centenary of First World War

'Programme 2017' is the latest in the Welsh Government's series of annual Cymru'n Cofio Wales Remembers 1914-1918 brochures which highlight events and projects of Welsh interest taking place in Wales and further afield throughout the year. The launch coincides with the First World War Partnership Day 2017 event held in Builth Wells on 26 January.

The central focus for this year's commemoration is the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele), which will be commemorated at a National Service of Remembrance at the Welsh Memorial in Langemark, Belgium on 31 July 2017.

The Third Battle of Ypres is of particular resonance for Wales as it claimed the lives of many Welsh soldiers including the renowned Welsh language poet, Hedd Wyn. Hedd Wyn was killed on 31 July 1917 and is buried at the nearby Artillery Wood cemetery, close to Ypres.

People are welcome to attend the National Service of Remembrance but must [register in advance](#) (external link) by 26 March 2017. Entry will be by pre-booked tickets only.

Other key events include the re-opening of Hedd Wyn's home following the £3.4m re-development led by Snowdonia National Park Authority and supported by the Welsh Government and the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Welsh Government will also hold a number of cultural events in partnership with the Government of Flanders on the shared history of Wales and Belgium.

First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

"Cymru'n Cofio Wales Remembers 1914 – 1918 gives us the opportunity to remember the lives of those who served in the First World War.

"The sacrifices the people of Wales made, alongside the rest of the UK and allied forces, should never be forgotten. Programme 2017 is testament to the outstanding level of collaboration and engagement seen across Wales since 2014, which set to continue through the year and beyond.

"It is important future generations understand how this terrible war shaped modern Wales, and we must learn lessons from the past to take us into a more peaceful future."