

Temporary relaxation of Glastir obligations to help farmers during current dry weather

The Glastir scheme offers financial support to farmers and land owners to improve the environmental management of their land.

Farmers have recently reported silage and hay crops being particularly badly affected, with the quality and supplies deteriorating due to the current dry spell.

For Glastir contract holders with hay meadow options, the derogation will allow them to begin cutting hay meadows immediately. Though contract holders do not need to contact Rural Payments Wales (RPW), their farm records and activity diaries will need to be updated.

Contract holders having other difficulties meeting their Glastir commitments are advised to contact RPW immediately, in writing or using RPW online. All applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Any claimants of land-based schemes, including the Basic Payment Scheme, with land affected by fire can contact RPW to request 'Force Majeure', which can apply in extreme circumstances. Claimants will need to provide proof that a fire has occurred on the land.

Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths, said:

“Fluctuating weather conditions can prove a real challenge for farmers in caring for their livestock and maintaining their land.

“It’s important we take swift action to support farmers delivering the Glastir Scheme so they can mitigate the impact of the prolonged dry weather, while continuing to deliver their Glastir commitments in the longer term.”

Full details of the derogations and advice can be found here: [Cross compliance: exemptions due to prolonged hot and dry weather](#).

£2.3m EU funding to boost financial

services and data science talent pool

The additional investment in the financial services graduate programme, which has already received £2.5m of EU funding, will support 35 more graduates to become professionals in these two important sectors in South East Wales.

A pilot scheme will also be launched to recruit 25 graduates to a two-year data science programme, which will start in September 2018. Graduates with the required experience will be equipped with the skills and knowledge to become tomorrow's data scientists and leaders, by fast-tracking their career progression from entry level to junior data scientists.

Led by the Welsh Contact Centre Forum, the pilot programme will target current and future skills shortages in data science and analytics.

Professor Drakeford said:

"We are committed to helping people get the skills they need to pursue successful careers and drive forward high-growth sectors, which are vital to economic growth and employment.

"This is another example of how EU funds are supporting Wales' growth ambitions. We are calling on the UK Government to replace this vital source of funding after the UK leaves the EU so we can continue to invest in programmes such as these."

Sandra Busby, managing director of the Welsh Contact Centre Forum, said:

"Everyone everywhere needs to be data ready and we can't let the data science boom pass us by.

"We have global businesses in Wales which need access to the best data scientists, which is why we have established the Welsh data science graduate programme to provide industry leaders with a high-quality pool of talent to choose from.

"The successful candidates will benefit from the latest technology and systems, getting hands-on experience from the best this country has to offer. They'll come out of their two-year placements well-rounded and versatile and with an MSc – exactly what every employer is looking for.

"We are also pleased to extend our financial services graduate programme to benefit more graduates to develop careers in this exciting sector. We've got an excellent track record in securing employment for our graduates and look forward to the same success with our inaugural class of 2018."

Economy Secretary opens new life sciences headquarters in Crumlin

Following a £1.8m package of Welsh Government support, the company has chosen the Caerphilly town as the location for its new global headquarters.

It has also centralised its manufacturing and development activities from sites in Blaenavon, Cardiff and Dundee onto one new state of the art facility site in Crumlin.

The move to Crumlin will see over 360 jobs being safeguarded and created in Wales by 2020.

This means that in line with the ambitions of the Welsh Government's high level plan, Our Valleys, Our Future, BBI's move will deliver high quality career opportunities in the South Wales Valleys and provide a significant boost to the local economy.

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates said:

As a highly successful company with a turnover of more than £60m and a strategically important player in the global life science sector, BBI Group is already a made-in-Wales success story.

I am delighted that Welsh Government support has enabled the company to establish its global headquarters here and centralise its manufacturing and development activities in Crumlin, bringing new and high quality job opportunities to the South Wales Valleys.

This is absolutely in line with the ambitions of our high level plan Our Valleys Our Future, and with the aspirations of my Economic Action Plan, which aims to ensure that the fruits of economic prosperity fall much more evenly across Wales.

The Economic Action Plan is also clear about the economic growth opportunities of attracting global headquarters to Wales and our ambition to build on our success in this area.

I am delighted to see BBI Group's new state of the art facility in Crumlin first hand and wish the company every success in its new home.

BBI Group Chairman Alan Peterson said:

The opening of our new Global Headquarters is a significant step

towards realising our strategic long-term growth plans. It gives us the opportunity to compete more effectively in our key markets in Europe, USA and China.

The Crumlin site enables BBI to drive our customers' future growth by expanding our capacity to provide key reagents and services for the healthcare diagnostics industry. We're delighted that our Global Headquarters is now open and we are able to contribute to the local economy and offer quality job opportunities to the local community.

Minister sees how Welsh poetry is helping NHS patients on its 70th Birthday

The Minister met staff and patients who are taking part in the Cerddi Byw Nawr project, which is run in conjunction with Literature Wales. The project was overseen by former Chair, Crown and Prose medal winning poet and teacher Mererid Hopwood who has recently undertaken a residency at the palliative care unit of the hospital.

The project encouraged patients, their families and staff to express their thoughts and feelings centred on the themes of life and death in both Welsh and English and has resulted in the development of a digital book entitled "Cerddi Byw Nawr / Live Now Poems".

The minister met patients and staff at the hospital to learn more about how the project is helping patients and their families come to terms with their terminal illnesses and comforting them during a difficult time.

The minister said;

"It was a pleasure to join staff, patients and their families to celebrate the NHS's 70th Birthday and to find out more about Cerddi Byw Nawr. The project is an excellent example of the role literature, particularly in a person's mother tongue, can provide comfort and allow people to express themselves at a difficult time.

"It is also testament to how the NHS and its staff go the extra mile, not only to ensure patients' physical and health needs are met but to ensure their and their families' emotional and mental wellbeing is addressed. All over Britain The NHS is full of people who demonstrate considerable dedication and commitment to their

jobs and incredible care and humanity to their patients and I thank them for all they do.”

Economy and Transport Secretary appoints Chair of the National Infrastructure Commission for Wales

Mr John Lloyd Jones OBE, FRAgS, Hon FLI will take up the post for one year.

Welsh Government established the NICfW to support independent, better informed advice on a longer-term strategy for infrastructure investment, which enshrines the goals and principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

It has been established as a non-statutory, advisory body to provide advice and recommendations to the Welsh Ministers on the economic and environmental infrastructure needs of Wales over five to 30 years. The Commission will also considering the interactions of these needs with ‘social infrastructure’, such as schools, hospitals and housing.

Economy and Transport Secretary Ken Skates said:

“The calibre of candidates that came forward for this role through the public appointments process was high and I want to thank all those that took the time to put their name forward. I have decided to appoint the Chair on an interim basis for one year to focus on establishing the Commission in its initial phase.

“Mr Jones has excellent credentials and offers stability and reliability while I assess the most important skills and knowledge for the Commission in the longer term. He is a seasoned Chair, with wide and varied knowledge of the public and private sectors and, crucially, has the ability and the skills to create a board and get it working quickly. Mr Jones has a track record of leadership and I am confident he will be able to establish a commission capable of successfully assessing infrastructure need and shaping our long-term investment strategy.”