

Options work underway to improve A494 River Dee Bridge

Environmental and land surveys are currently being carried out in the area and Public Information Exhibitions will be taking place in July to introduce the team, inform the public on the current situation and how they will be looking at options to improve the crossing.

The upgrade of the River Dee Bridge is identified in the Welsh Government's 'Moving North Wales Forward' as a scheme for development to address the existing traffic bottleneck and overcome issues with the existing bridge.

The crossing, which was built in 1960, forms a key strategic route between North East Wales and North West England and carries more than 61,000 vehicles per day.

That figure is set to increase over the next 20 years and possible improvements are now being looked at to strengthen the crossing's resilience.

The Welsh Government, through the North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agent, has commissioned Mott MacDonald and their partners Richards, Morehead & Laing to examine the improvement options.

The Public Information Exhibitions will take place at Deeside Leisure Centre on Saturday 14 July between 10am-4pm and at St Andrews Church Hall in Garden City on Monday 16th July between 2pm-8pm. Both are free to attend and everyone is welcome.

Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport, Ken Skates said:

"We are investing significant funding in the Deeside area to improve transport infrastructure and address existing traffic issues.

"The A494 River Dee Bridge improvement scheme is an important development which will improve the resilience of the existing bridge and provide opportunities for better carriageway alignment to help relieve congestion and enhance safety.

"Initial work is underway with surveys currently being carried out and the upcoming Public Information Exhibitions are a good opportunity for people to meet the team and learn more about the scheme."

New report sets out steps for a stronger post-16 education system

Last year, Education Secretary Kirsty Williams announced the appointment of Professor Harvey Weingarten, President and CEO of the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO), to undertake a Review of Systems for Monitoring and Improving the Effectiveness of Post-compulsory Education in Wales.

The Review, which has been published today, recognises the fragmentation of the current system for performance monitoring and provides 10 recommendations for how this system could be improved.

The recommendations are based on a more comprehensive and holistic assessment of the contribution of Wales' individual institutions and its PCET system as a whole.

Professor Weingarten said:

“In conducting my review, it was clear that there is a high quality of people in the Welsh PCET system. This is true in the institutions, government and agencies, each with a passion and commitment to Welsh education and students. There was a willingness to consider how the Welsh PCET system could be improved and do an even better job of helping students and Wales achieve their goals.

“My recommendations would provide government and institutions with the evidence base to determine the effectiveness of the PCET system, inform decisions necessary to improve the effectiveness of the system and maximise the contribution of each institution and the system as a whole to the most important Welsh objectives.

“I provide this final report in that spirit – as an analysis and set of recommendations offered to best monitor, and improve the effectiveness of the PCET system in Wales.”

Welcoming the report, Kirsty Williams said:

“Professor Weingarten's review has given us some really valuable input to help support the longer term reform of post-compulsory education and training in Wales, which includes the current technical consultation on the creation of a new Tertiary and Education and Research Commission for Wales.

“It is an excellent piece of work, which I know has benefited hugely from Professor Weingarten's engagement right across the sector in Wales.

“We will now take the time to give careful consideration to the 10 recommendations in the report, which must be seen in the context of our ongoing development of systems for monitoring and supporting the post-compulsory education system in Wales.”

£33m for health innovation to boost economy and create jobs

£24m of funding comes jointly from the European Regional Development Fund and Welsh Government which over three years, will support Accelerate: the Welsh Health Innovation and Technology Accelerator. Accelerate will bring together clinical, academic and business expertise to develop and deploy new, innovative products and services within the Welsh health and care system.

A further £9m of Welsh Government funding will be used to create additional health innovation centres across Wales. The core aim of the centres will be to develop cutting edge health technology to improve the prevention, treatment and management of long term chronic conditions and take advantage of new and emerging technologies.

The money was jointly announced today (Wednesday, 13 June) by the Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething and Economy Secretary, Ken Skates.

ACCELERATE is led by the Life Sciences Hub Wales in partnership with Cardiff University, Swansea University and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. It will work with industry partners to speed up the translation of ideas into new technology products and services, and to accelerate the deployment and adoption of new technology products and services into health and care, creating lasting economic value in Wales.

Organisations will be able to bid for money from the £9m fund to develop health innovation centres, similar to the Welsh Wound Innovation Centre and Respiratory Innovation Centre. The centres will bring together experts in health and business to develop, test and implement new ideas for the prevention and cure of chronic conditions as well as new and emerging technologies. The funding is on a loan repayment basis and it is expected that the centres will become self-financing by generating profits and drawing in funding from other sources.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“Developing innovative new ways to prevent, treat and cure illness and disease is a vital part of the Welsh Government’s vision for the future of the NHS in Wales. The Accelerate programme and new

health innovation centres fund will help develop new ideas for health products and services more quickly for use in our NHS and across the world.”

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates said:

“Our life sciences sector is thriving and worth around £2bn to the Welsh economy. This investment will help build on the expertise and talent we have already built up in his sector. In the long-term I expect to see this investment result in hundreds of highly skilled jobs and support economic growth.”

Cari-Anne Quinn, Chief Executive Officer at the Life Sciences Hub Wales said:

“We are thrilled to lead the ACCELERATE Programme to support commercialisation and product innovation across the life sciences, health and care. The ground-breaking Programme offers an opportunity to deliver economic and patient benefit on an unprecedented scale in Wales. Formally launching on 2nd July, the Life Sciences Hub Wales looks forward to collaborating closely with our partners to support Wales in becoming the place of choice for innovation in health, care and wellbeing.”

[Letting Fees Bill to make renting simpler and fairer](#)

The Renting Homes (Fees etc.) (Wales) Bill will:

- ensure tenants are no longer charged for an accompanied viewing, receiving an inventory, signing a contract, or renewing a tenancy
- permit letting agents and landlords to only charge fees relating to rent, security deposits, holding deposits, or when a tenant breaches a contract
- provide a regulation-making power to limit the level of security deposits
- cap holding deposits to reserve a property before the signing of a rental contract to the equivalent of a week’s rent and create provisions to ensure their prompt repayment
- create a clear, simple and robust enforcement regime for when offences occur.

The enforcement regime will allow for fixed penalty notices to be issued against anyone requiring a prohibited payment; if penalties are not paid Local Housing Authorities can prosecute offences through the Magistrates Court. Convictions for an offence could result in an unlimited fine, and will be taken into account by Rent Smart Wales when considering whether to grant or renew a licence.

Rebecca Evans said:

“In recent years we have seen a significant increase in the number of people renting in Wales. The private rented sector now accounts for 15% of all housing.

“This Bill builds on the work we have already done here in Wales through the Housing and Renting Homes Acts to ensure that those wishing to rent in the private sector can expect high standards, fair treatment and transparency.

“Fees charged by letting agents often present a significant barrier to many tenants, especially those on lower incomes.

“The Bill will mean that tenants no longer face significant upfront fees when they start renting. In most instances they will only need to pay their monthly rent and a security deposit.

“No longer will tenants be charged for an accompanied viewing, receiving an inventory or signing a contract. No longer will they be charged for renewing a tenancy. And no longer will they have to pay check out fees when they move out.

“I want renting to be a positive and widely accessible choice for people and this Bill will ensure that rental costs become more reasonable, affordable and transparent.”

Ready, set... Celebrate!

parkrun UK is collaborating with the NHS to help celebrate their milestone anniversary by hosting several special events across the UK, as part of their mission to encourage participation to make the world a healthier and happier place.

Hundreds of parkruns take place in parks and open spaces across Wales and the rest of the UK every Saturday. The community-led events are designed for people of all ages and abilities – including walkers and are all free of charge.

Regular physical activity is one of the most important things you can do for your health. It can help control your weight, it reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers. This is why increasing levels of physical activity is an important commitment within the national strategy Prosperity for All.

To stay healthy, the Chief Medical Officer guidelines say that adults should try to be active daily and aim to achieve at least 150 minutes of physical activity over a week through a variety of activities. Yet at present only 54% of adults in Wales get enough exercise.

Before making his way to the start line, Dr Atherton said: "Participating in your local parkrun is a great way to get fit, for free.

"As a nation, we need to be healthier and more active to help reduce the risk of a range of conditions such as obesity, heart disease and to improve our mental health. These are issues that are putting pressure on the NHS, but that we can take steps ourselves to try and improve."

Double Olympic gold medallist Dame Kelly Holmes, who is supporting the parkrun NHS 70th birthday celebrations this year, said: "There is no doubt that increased levels of activity lead to improved mood, self-esteem and a wide range of health benefits. I know from first-hand experience how sociable and welcoming parkruns are, so it's fantastic to see it join forces with the NHS to encourage even more people to get active in this special year."