

Mark Polin appointed new Chair of Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

Mark Polin is currently the Chief Constable of North Wales Police and has had 14 years executive experience in a number of highly demanding roles.

He will retire from his current role in July and take up the role of Chair of BCU from September.

Speaking in the Senedd this afternoon, the Health Secretary said:

“I am pleased to announce Mark Polin has been appointed to the role of Chair of BCU. He will bring a wealth of public sector leadership, governance experience, commitment to and knowledge of the communities of North Wales from his role as Chief Constable of North Wales Police. He will help to lead the Health Board through this next critical phase of its improvement journey.”

Mark Polin said:

“I am delighted to have been selected for the position of Chair of Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board. I look forward to working with all members of the Board, including the executive team, to improve health and wellbeing across North Wales and develop a clear path by which to steer the Board out of special measures.

“My research prior to selection served to highlight the scale of the challenge we face but I am confident that through clear direction, leadership, joint endeavour and good governance – coupled with the continuing support and scrutiny of Welsh Government – the necessary improvements can be achieved. I would hope my public sector experience, my knowledge of and commitment to the communities of North Wales and my existing relationships with partner organisations will also assist us all to move forward together.”

Mark Polin has worked primarily in the Police Service and has been the leader of North Wales Police for almost nine years. He has worked in several other police forces and has a proven track record of leading and improving performance, underpinned by organisational development and cultural change, as well as managing risk and reputation.

Lesley Griffiths sets out timetable for Basic Payment Scheme post-Brexit

Speaking in plenary on the future of land management, the Cabinet Secretary confirmed that the Basic Payment Scheme will continue as planned for 2018 and for the 2019 scheme year.

From 2020 when powers return from Europe, a gradual and multi-year transition from existing to new schemes will take place. By 2025 the Cabinet Secretary would like implementation completed and will set out further details in July, which will be subject to consultation.

The Cabinet Secretary also reiterated her five core principles for the future of land and the people who manage it. They are:

- we must keep land managers on the land;
- food production remains vital for our nation;
- future support will centre on the provision of public goods that deliver for all the people of Wales; and
- all land managers should have the opportunity to benefit from new schemes.
- we need a prosperous and resilient agricultural sector in Wales, whatever nature of Brexit.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“Brexit brings significant changes and we must have a well-planned and multi-year transition. I learned the importance of avoiding a cliff edge removal of subsidies during my recent trip to New Zealand.

“I have always been clear that we should not lose a penny of funding as a result of leaving the EU and I will continue to fight to protect a full and fair allocation of funding to support land management in Wales.

“The UK Government has so far failed to provide any detail or commitment beyond 2022 and I recently jointly wrote with my Scottish counterpart to Michael Gove seeking urgent clarity on future funding.

“Despite this uncertainty I want to set a timetable for Welsh farmers. The Basic Payment Scheme will continue as planned in 2018. I can confirm today that I will also continue to operate the Basic Payment Scheme for the 2019 scheme year.

“From 2020 powers will return from Europe. I then envisage a gradual and multi-year transition from existing to new schemes. By 2025 I want to have completed implementation. I will set out further details in July and can guarantee that changes will be subject to explicit consultation.

“The great challenge of Brexit is to ensure its impact does not undermine the true value land management provides Wales. The great opportunity is to put in place new made-in-Wales policy to help the industry to adjust to future market forces.

“As a Government, we are determined to put Wales in the strongest position to thrive in a post-Brexit world. I am confident our land managers can adapt but it is this Government’s role to provide the time and support needed to achieve this.”

Wales to become first ‘Refill Nation’ in the World

To become the UK’s first ‘Refill Nation’, work will get underway to improve access to drinking water in public places across Wales. The Welsh Government will work with City to Sea on developing the Refill campaign for Wales, as well as working closely with water companies in Wales and more widely with our businesses, charities and major events. The work will also include a behavioural change campaign to help people see the value of water and make tap water their first choice for hydration.

The Minister will also announce an additional £15 million of capital funding to further improve Local Authority recycling collection systems and infrastructure, including for plastics.

Speaking at the Senedd today, Hannah Blythyn will announce the key findings of the research on Extended Producer Responsibility which focused on reducing and recycling waste and reducing litter from six types of food and drink packaging.

Responding to the report, the Minister confirmed that the Welsh Government will work with Defra and other devolved administrations on the following:

- Consider a UK based deposit return scheme (DRS) for drinks containers, and the Minister will meet her counterparts from the UK and Scottish Governments about this next week. Any scheme must take account of risks and benefits to existing provision and recycling levels and build on the work already done in Wales.
- Consider amendments to the Producer Responsibility Obligations Packaging

Waste Regulations so that producers and retailers pay a larger share of waste management costs.

- Continue to work with HM Treasury on a UK single-use plastics tax. At the same time consideration will be given to a tax, levy or charge on single-use beverage cups for Wales. The mandatory use of reusable cups and a potential pilot is also being considered.

The Minister also plans to commission further feasibility studies to ensure a UK DRS delivers optimum benefits for Wales, as well as gaining a greater understanding of the types and sources of litter in Wales.

The Minister also confirmed the Welsh Government has signed up to WRAP's new 'Plastics Pact', a commitment by businesses to reduce the amount of plastic waste generated in the UK.

The Welsh Government will be working with Welsh businesses, public sector, charities and major events to help make Wales free of unnecessary single use plastic. WRAP Cymru, funded by Welsh Government, is producing a "Plastics Recycling Route Map" for Wales, which will recommend action to increase the use of recycle in plastic manufactured in Wales.

The Minister said:

"Wales is a world leader in recycling. We are the best in the UK, second in Europe and third in the world. I am keen to build on this success.

"I'm pleased to announce a range of measures to further boost recycling and reduce waste, including £15m for Local Authorities to improve their recycling rates across Wales. I also want Wales to become the World's first 'Refill Nation', making tap water easily accessible across the whole of Wales.

"I am currently considering Wales' involvement in a UK-wide deposit return scheme. Developing approaches on a UK wide basis can be less complicated for consumers and better for businesses who have told us they prefer this approach, particularly as we prepare for Brexit. I am also considering making changes to regulations so that producers and retailers pay a larger share of waste management costs.

"We continue to work with HM Treasury on a UK single-use plastics tax. At the same time we will continue to consider a tax, levy or charge on single-use beverage cups for Wales. The mandatory use of reusable cups and a potential pilot is also something I am considering.

"We were the first in the UK to bring in a plastic carrier bag charge. We can lead the way once again and make Wales the first in the world when it comes to recycling."

Credit Unions receive over £844,000 to help people across Wales

Credit Unions across Wales will receive over £844,000 of funding over two years for projects that support people who are struggling financially. Projects include:

- a prison savers scheme run by Bridgend Credit Union;
- a collaborative project led by Bridgend Credit Union to develop a mobile banking app to benefit six credit unions;
- the continuation of a joint schools savings and money skills project by Bridgend Credit Union and Cardiff & Vale Credit Union;
- Celtic Credit Union expanding their community engagement and school savers projects in Swansea and Neath Port Talbot;
- work to promote Cambrian Credit Union services as an alternative to high-cost credit; and
- outreach services to be set up by Cambrian Credit Union in rural parts of Powys.

Rebecca Evans, Minister for Housing and Regeneration said:

“Credit unions in Wales deliver financial awareness education to adults and children. They help to equip people to make good financial choices, and avoid irresponsible lenders. They support people dealing with debt problems, and provide some of the most vulnerable people with sound financial products that they would struggle to access elsewhere.”

Alun Davies, Cabinet Secretary for Local Government said:

“We all know the important role credit unions play in helping people who are struggling to manage their money.

“This is particularly useful to prisoners, allowing them to leave custody with savings and a credit union account. This can help former prisoners reintegrate into society, for example, making it easier for them to pay their rent and to receive wages from employment – all important factors in reducing reoffending.”

Health Secretary responds to Tawel Fan report

Responding to the independent Health and Social Care Advisory Service (HASCAS) report published today (3 May), Mr Gething said whilst it did not substantiate previous claims of institutional abuse or neglect on the Tawel Fan ward, the report highlights failings of governance which have compromised care.

He said:

“This report is the result of a very extensive and thorough investigation into the care and treatment provided to patients on the Tawel Fan Ward of the Ablett Unit at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd.

“Whilst the report does provide the very important reassurance that they could not substantiate previous claims of institutional abuse or neglect, it does reinforce wider failings within the health board. It highlights the need for more rapid attention to secure improvements across a range of areas, whilst recognising that some of that work is already underway. Overall the report makes it very clear there is still some way for the health board to go and this will require further focused oversight under the special measures arrangements.”

The Health Secretary urged caution about jumping to conclusions about the apparent contradiction in the conclusions of the HASCAS investigation and some earlier reports.

“The HASCAS investigation had a much wider remit and unlike the previous report, was able to access a comprehensive set of documentation, including clinical records, and draw in specific mental health expertise,” he said.

Mr Gething added:

“This is a very substantial report that warrants further careful reading and consideration. I will be discussing the report with the health board and responding more fully in due course.

“Whilst this will be very difficult day for both families and staff of BCU who were involved or affected by the investigation, I would hope that these HASCAS findings can act as a catalyst to the lifting of a dark shadow that has extended over mental health services in North Wales for a number of years.”