

New rules to ensure rented homes are fit for human habitation

Section 91 of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 places an obligation on a landlord to ensure the property they rent is fit for human habitation at the start of and during the length of the new occupation contract. The regulations set out the considerations a landlord must make in determining whether a property is fit for human habitation. These include damp and mould growth, noise, sanitation and drainage.

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- the presence of a working smoke alarm
- the presence of a working carbon monoxide alarm
- the requirement for electrical safety testing, at least every five years.

Communities and Children's Secretary, Carl Sargeant said:

"Quality homes are crucial to people's well-being. We all know poor living conditions affect a person's physical and mental health. Poor housing conditions such as overcrowding, damp, and cold have been linked to respiratory diseases as well as illnesses such as eczema and hypothermia.

"Housing should go beyond putting a roof over people's heads. Everyone should be entitled to live in an environment that is as safe and healthy as possible. There is a need for us to address poor housing conditions, alongside our ambition to raise standards generally.

"The Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 replaces various, complex pieces of existing legislation with one clear legal framework. This includes the landlord's duty, within the Act, to ensure a dwelling is fit for human habitation."

Microbeads ban in Wales – Consultation to go live on Monday

Following a previous UK-wide consultation, which revealed overwhelming support for a ban, the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs agreed to implement such a move in Wales, through Welsh secondary legislation.

The twelve-week consultation proposes a commencement date for the ban of 30th June 2018. The Welsh Government will work with the Welsh Local Government Association with a view to using Trading Standards as the relevant enforcement authority.

Lesley Griffiths said:

“Litter is a major issue for our seas. I am pleased we, along with the rest of the UK, are taking positive action to reduce the amount of plastic which ends up in our oceans.

“Although we do not believe the use of microbeads is widespread among manufacturers in Wales, the purpose of this consultation, in addition to raising awareness of the issue, is to ensure the legislation does not disadvantage Welsh businesses in any way.

“The proposed commencement date of 30th June is, I believe, sensible as it provides businesses long enough to prepare for a ban and it gives us a realistic timescale to draft and introduce legislation which is fit for purpose and future-proof.

“We are extremely proud Wales has the third best recycling rate in the world. We still have some way to go, though, before we achieve our ultimate aim of becoming a zero waste country.

“This ban is part of a package of measures we are considering to reduce waste and tackle the damage created by plastic pollution. We are also examining the possibility of implementing an Extended Producer Responsibility scheme, where producers take responsibility for the waste they produce, and a tax on disposable plastic is one of four new tax proposals we have identified as being worthy of further consideration.

“All of these measures have the potential to make a positive contribution to protect the marine environment. It is timely we plan to introduce a microbeads ban in 2018; which is Wales’ Year of the Sea.”

The consultation on a ban on the manufacture and sale of cosmetics and personal care products containing plastic microbeads will be available on the

Lesley Griffiths announces £1m to progress plans to protect East Rhyl homes

The money will be used for design work for their coast protection scheme.

Construction work is anticipated to begin from September 2019 and will include a new rock revetment and raised parapet wall complementing the recently completed flood storage area and works around Rhyl Golf Course.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“Over recent years we have demonstrated an excellent record of investment of funding flood risk management work. Reducing risks to the residents of East Rhyl is a priority we share with the Council.

We know these defences need strengthening for the long term and I am pleased to see this project move on to its detailed design phase.

“We are working with coastal local authorities towards a £150 million investment to reduce the risks we face from sea-level rise and climate change. This complements a further £144 million investment in flood risk management over the lifetime of this Government.”

Councillor Brian Jones, Cabinet Lead Member with responsibility for the environment at Denbighshire County Council, added:

“We very much welcome this funding from Welsh Government as it will greatly assist us to achieve our priority of improving flood and coastal defences in this part of the county.

“The local community in east Rhyl has experienced recent flooding and has called on the Council and its partners to look at what can be done to try and minimise the risk of such incidents happening again.

“We have already carried out work in the Garford Road area to improve defences – this latest scheme will hopefully provide reassurance to the local community that we are committed to working towards protecting the safety of residents”

Rural Ceredigion guest house serves up superfast service

The upgrade to superfast fibre at Bryn Berwyn near Tresaith in Ceredigion has been a big boost to the business and allows guests to take advantage of the robust site-wide wi-fi system.

This means visitors can surf the web with ease and make the best use of the property's Smart TVs amongst other benefits, with owner Gareth Robinson saying the move to superfast was a 'no brainer'.

The country house has currently taken a package offering its customers high-speed connectivity with speeds of 70 Mbps through fibre-to-the premises (FTTP). This technology, where fast fibre is run directly from the telephone exchange to the property, provides among the fastest speeds in the UK. FTTP customers can currently get ultrafast broadband speeds of up to 330Mbps and could access even faster gigabit speeds in future.

Owner Gareth Robinson said:

"Going superfast has made a world of difference at Bryn Berwyn Country House. Being able to provide a positive answer to a guest's query about broadband and wi-fi services safe in the knowledge we have a strong, stable and fast connection in a remote area of Wales is simply fantastic.

"Feedback from visitors has been really encouraging with many saying how pleased they are to be able to stream in high definition or even do some work whilst enjoying the spectacular views.

"Having much better broadband, which was installed by dyfedsuperfast.co.uk, has also enabled us to run surveys with customers so we can continue to improve our service.

"I'd encourage any business which has access to superfast to get it. It's worked out brilliant for us, made a difference to our website www.brynberwyn.com and had a real impact on guests."

Minister for Skills and Science, Julie James, said:

"I'm very pleased upgrading to superfast broadband has had such a positive effect at Bryn Berwyn Country House near Tresaith.

"This is a great example of the lengths the Superfast Cymru project goes to in delivering the infrastructure capable of providing fast

fibre broadband access to some of the remotest areas of Wales.

“Faster connection speeds can open a swathe of opportunities for businesses throughout Wales. From downloading large files more quickly to engaging better with customers, superfast broadband can make a real difference.

“More than 653,000 premises across Wales have now been given access to fast fibre broadband thanks to the Superfast Cymru programme. Many areas of the country including Ceredigion would be without any access to superfast broadband without the intervention.

“We are already working towards offering fast reliable broadband to every property in Wales so that even more people can take advantage of the many benefits it can deliver.”

Ed Hunt, regional director for Openreach, said:

“The roll out of superfast broadband is making a huge difference to how companies such as Bryn Berwyn Country House can now do business.

“We’re bringing superfast connectivity to some very rural parts of Wales which can in turn prove to be a major boost to businesses and the local economy through increased trade, opening up new markets and saving time.

“Thousands of homes and businesses in Ceredigion can already do the same as the Bryn Berwyn Country House and connect to their best ever broadband speeds when they sign up with a service provider, and we’d encourage local people to check out their options.

“It’s a highly competitive market, so people could potentially be surfing at much higher speeds at a similar cost to their current service. Once you’ve made the switch to superfast we’re confident you’ll never look back.”

Superfast Cymru is the partnership between the Welsh Government, BT, UK Government and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), bringing faster broadband to areas which would otherwise not receive it.

The Welsh Government also runs the Access Broadband Cymru scheme, which can offer assistance to those not able to access superfast broadband by providing grant aid to help them receive it through other technologies.

Further details are available at www.gov.wales/broadband

Successful GP recruitment campaign to continue – Vaughan Gething

The international and UK-wide campaign is aimed at medical students, foundation doctors considering the next stage in their career, as well as trainees coming to the end of their training, to encourage them to train, work and live in Wales. It also appeals to recently qualified GPs, those in the early stages of their career and experienced GPs who may wish to work differently, or return to the workforce in Wales.

The success of the campaign resulted in 91% of Wales' GP training places being filled in 2017.

Vaughan Gething will today visit Winch Lane Surgery in Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire to meet trainees who have chosen to start their GP training in Wales.

Pembrokeshire is one of the Welsh Government's incentivised areas – in 2016 0% of places were filled, but following the Train. Work. Live campaign, 100% of the places were filled in in 2017.

During the visit the Health Secretary will announce that last year's GP training incentive scheme will be available again this year. The scheme offers £20,000 to train in areas of Wales which have had long term difficulty filling places, on the condition they will remain in the area for one year of practice afterwards.

A second incentive of a one-off payment for all GP specialty programme trainees to cover the first sitting of their final exams will also be continuing.

This year, an incentive is also being offered to encourage psychiatrists to train in Wales. This consists of a one off-payment of up to £1,900 for psychiatry core trainees to cover the cost of one sitting of the MRCPsych membership exams.

The renewed national and international campaign features real medical professionals, who are either from outside Wales and have chosen to move here to train and live or are returning to Wales following a period of working away.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

"I've been absolutely delighted with the success of this campaign, but there's more work to do to ensure all of our GP training places are filled for the future.

"Today I will be announcing the continuation of the incentives we have put in place, and I'm pleased we are extending the campaign to

encourage psychiatrists to come to Wales. We know there is a real recruitment challenge for the psychiatry workforce across the UK.

“For those considering a career in Wales it’s important to highlight the benefits of working and living here, including an Education Contract for junior doctors, the first in the UK. , It guarantees ring-fenced time for learning within the working week to ensure trainee doctors will have access to a wide range of educational opportunities to support their career development.

“I’m proud of the impact this campaign has had so far. It has shown that Wales is not only an excellent place to live but it’s also a great place to train and work. I am sure it will continue to go from strength to strength.”

Harriet Poynter, a trainee GP who, after seeing the campaign, has taken advantage of the Welsh Government’s incentive scheme and moved from London to Pembrokeshire said:

“I have lived in London all my life, so a move to Wales was a big step for me. It was always the plan to continue my training in London, but after a year in a long-distance relationship with a man based in Wales I started to weigh-up my options.

“The information provided through the Train. Work. Live. campaign definitely helped sway my decision, as did the incentive to come to the area, which has helped to put a deposit on a house – something I would have found extremely difficult to do in London.

“I am already seeing the benefits of a move to Pembrokeshire. The best thing about working in the hospital here is the effect the Welsh education contract is having on my training, allowing me to meet all my training needs. I’m also enjoying living on the coast, even the drive to work still amazes me. There is so much to do here and everyone is so friendly and welcoming.”