

If you can't go Superfast yet – let us know

Over 645,000 premises in Wales can already access superfast broadband thanks to Superfast Cymru, and by the end of the year this figure is expected to reach 690,000.

From 2018 the Welsh Government will be working on how to reach the final few per cent of premises without access to superfast broadband. So that this work is as accurate as possible it needs to hear from those not yet connected.

A list of potential premises has been published and is open for comments until July 13. An interactive map can help residents and businesses check if they are already included on the list. The Welsh Government also wants to hear from communities who have an interest in driving their own solutions.

Minister for Skills and Science Julie James said:

“With over eight out of ten premises in Wales now able to access superfast broadband, the situation has improved greatly. This compares with just over half in 2014. This progress has been largely thanks to Superfast Cymru which is continuing to the end of this year.

“However, we are now at the stage where we are looking at the final few percent of premises not covered by the Superfast Cymru rollout or by the telecommunications companies’ own plans. So that the work we carry out from 2018 onwards is as effective as possible we need those without access to superfast broadband to let us know and take part in the consultation.

“The consultation will help us to further refine the list of unconnected premises. The more response we receive, the more comprehensive the list will be.

“If there are communities that have an interest in driving their own solutions, I want to hear from them.

“This is your chance to influence what happens with the final few per cent of premises in Wales who are not yet able to access superfast broadband.”

The consultation is available on:

<https://consultations.gov.wales/consultations/next-generation-access-broadband>.

Welsh Government appoints new Chief Optometric Adviser

Mr O'Sullivan qualified as an optometrist at Glasgow Caledonian University and Leeds General Infirmary.

He has served as Optometric Adviser to Hywel Dda University Health Board for over 14 years, where he has helped lead work to set up schemes and services to improve ophthalmology and optometry across Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion. Most recently, he has served as Optometric Adviser to Cardiff and Vale University Health Board.

As Chief Optometric Adviser, he will provide the Welsh Government with independent professional advice relating to optometric services and eye health matters in Wales. He will also lead the development of Welsh Government policy and legislation relating to the optometry profession and eye health.

Announcing the appointment, Dr Frank Atherton said:

"I'm very pleased to announce the appointment of David O'Sullivan as the new Chief Optometric Adviser to the Welsh Government.

"He will play a key role in helping to improve eye health in Wales, and will provide professional leadership of the optometry profession across the country. I very much look forward to working with him to further improve eye health and reduce inequalities."

David O'Sullivan said:

"I am delighted to take up this post and to continue the excellent work to date. Wales is a very exciting place to practice optometry and the profession has worked tirelessly to improve the eye health of the population of Wales.

"I am privileged to be working with such a dedicated group of professionals who continue to push boundaries across primary and secondary care for the benefit of their patients. I look forward to being able to help facilitate further change and improvement for the good of all citizens across Wales."

Brexit a year on: Devolved Administrations must play a key part in negotiations

Speaking at the conference, the Finance Secretary will say that the general election result means the UK Government does not have a mandate for a 'hard Brexit' and it is an opportunity to re-set the devolved administration's role in negotiations to leave the EU.

In a recent joint letter with the Scottish Government to David Davis, the Welsh Government put forward a series of practical steps to improve the engagement with the four devolved administrations, including the future role of the Joint Ministerial Committee set up to oversee negotiations.

The Finance Secretary is expected to tell the conference:

"The general election result sent a powerful message to the UK Government that it has no mandate for a 'hard Brexit', and that it must work differently to build a broad-based consensus across the UK on taking forward the Brexit process.

"We have been clear that this is an opportunity for the UK Government to reconsider their plans and their approach to the role of the devolved administrations in negotiations. With those negotiations beginning earlier this week, it is more pressing than ever for the UK Government to set out their approach.

"Brexit has big implications for the constitutional future of the UK which cannot be ignored. We can't just wind the clock back to pre-1973. Devolution is now an established part of the UK constitution and this must be respected.

"Only last week, we published our blueprint for a major constitutional renewal of the UK, which can meet the challenges Brexit poses for all devolved nations and the future governance of the country as a whole. It is clear that the existing inter-governmental mechanisms are not fit-for-purpose to enable agreement to be reached and these need to be overhauled as we prepare to leave the EU.

"The election result is also an opportunity to re-set the effectiveness of the current Joint Ministerial Committee set up to oversee the EU negotiations. That is why I have written jointly with the Scottish Government to David Davis setting out a series of practical steps to improve engagement and meet its original remit.

"At the centre of our proposals is the urgent need to resume the meetings at the earliest opportunity and agree a forward work

programme with meaningful input around negotiating meetings with the European Commission. We welcome the assurance in the Queen's Speech that the government wishes to build a broad consensus including with the Devolved Administrations – but now is the time to demonstrate that by urgent action.”

Wrexham's innovation hub opening soon

The new Business Wales Entrepreneurship Hub is being established to provide North Wales based entrepreneurs with the wrap around support they need to help their ventures grow.

The Economy Secretary announced in February that he was providing £1m funding to establish the new business hub and said he hoped it would support the creation of 100 new enterprises and 260 new jobs over the next two years.

The Hub, which is supported by the Welsh Government, will also work closely with Welsh ICE (Innovation Centre for Enterprise) to give start ups a bespoke package of support and the very best chance of making their businesses a success.

The new business hub will open in the heart of Wrexham town centre soon but while work to procure and prepare the new headquarters is being finalised, efforts are well underway to recruit the first set of entrepreneurs .

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“I am delighted the Welsh Government is supporting this excellent initiative in Wrexham. It will form an important part of our programme to support businesses across Wales and give start ups and budding entrepreneurs the space and help they need to get their ideas off the ground.

“Innovation and entrepreneurship are vital drivers for the economy and we know from the success of other incubators that this collaborative approach will bring a host of benefits to the wider Wrexham area. And the new Hub building will also provide a real focus to the ongoing regeneration of Wrexham town centre.

“Work is now underway to recruit the Hub's first set of entrepreneurs, with the next workshop being held in Wrexham on 12th July. I would urge local start up companies looking to get their business off the ground to come along to find out more about the potentially transformative help on offer.”

The next workshop for entrepreneurs will be held at Undegun, 9-11 Regent St, Wrexham on Wednesday, 12th July. It will provide local start up enterprises with the opportunity to see more detailed plans for the centre and learn more about the support on offer. To find out more you can call the Business Wales Helpline on 03000 6 03000 between 8:30am and 5:30pm (Monday to Friday) or contact us via www.businesswales.gov.wales.

[First Minister pays tribute to Armed Forces community](#)

The day is an annual opportunity for the nation to show support for the men and women who make up the armed forces community.

The First Minister will attend an event at the Owain Glyndwr Playing Fields in Caerphilly which will focus on the Welsh contribution to defence, past, present and future.

First Minister, Carwyn Jones said:

“We have a proud military history in Wales, and being here today gives us the opportunity to remember some of the anniversaries of previous conflicts in our nation’s history. This year will mark the centenary of the Battle of Passchendaele where amongst thousands of young men, Hedd Wyn our Welsh poet lost his life.

“Armed Forces Day is an opportunity to pay tribute to those that have served, are serving and to remember those that have made the ultimate sacrifice in defending our country and way of life.”

Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children, Carl Sargeant, who has responsibility for the Armed Forces in Wales, added:

“I think it’s fantastic that we have a day to formally thank our service men and women. It is a chance to think about the sacrifices our Armed Forces gave during these conflicts, and all other conflicts that have taken place over the years.

“It also gives us the opportunity to celebrate and remind us of the importance of supporting and honouring our Serving men, women and Reservists.”