

Superfast take-off for Gwynedd business

Leader of the House with responsibility for digital, Julie James visited Jim Ellis who co-runs When it Rains Creative, based at Llwyndyrus Farm, to see how accessing superfast speeds had made a real difference.

The farm has been enabled to access superfast broadband under the Superfast Cymru programme and is benefiting from Fibre-to-the-premises technology. This means the property has access to Ultrafast speeds of up to 330Mbps which is also enabling the farm to market the holiday cottages 'Llwyndyrus Farm Spa' and efficiently deal with bookings.

When it Rains Creative offers videography, photography and 3D visualisation services and a faster connection is playing a vital role in the business' future ambitions.

Jim Ellis recently won the Dr Emrys Award at the Royal Welsh Show for Embracing Innovation and Communications Skills. The award is for a person under 35 years of age, who lives and works in Wales and has contributed in an exceptional way to embracing innovation and skills.

Following the visit, Julie James said:

"I've been very pleased to visit Llwyndyrus Farm, where the benefits of a superfast broadband connection are being realised.

"It's been great to hear how Jim has been using faster connection speeds as part of When it Rains Creative. His passion for using technology to achieve his goals is evidently clear and I'm very pleased Superfast Cymru has delivered for him and the business.

"The programme has undoubtedly been a success by bringing superfast broadband access to almost 733,000 premises throughout Wales which would otherwise not have received it, largely in rural areas.

"It's also important to remember no premises in Gwynedd would have had access to superfast broadband without the intervention of Superfast Cymru, but now more than 58,400 in the county have thanks to our programme.

"While the programme has been a great success, there is more to do in reaching the remaining premises without access and we are now working on how to do this.

"Our Access Broadband Cymru and Ultrafast Connectivity Voucher Schemes are also available for those currently without access to superfast broadband."

Jim Ellis of When it Rains Creative said:

“Accessing superfast broadband has been absolutely essential for my personal growth as an aspiring entrepreneur and videographer as well as for the business and will be as we continue to grow.

“It is playing a vital role in helping us deal with customers, transferring data and working more efficiently.

“Superfast broadband has made a real and tangible difference and I’m delighted with the positive impact it continues to have.”

Ed Hunt, programme director for Openreach, said:

“Superfast Cymru was an enormous engineering project with a complex set of challenges, but our engineers have risen to the task, delivering one of the outstanding digital network roll-outs in Europe.

“Wales now has the largest full fibre to the home footprint in Britain as a result of the work our engineers carried out during Superfast Cymru. I’m delighted to see companies such as ‘When it Rains Creative’ reaping the benefits of this new infrastructure from their base on Llwyndyrus Farm near Pwllheli and accessing some of the fastest broadband speeds available in the UK.

“Our new digital infrastructure is bringing a wealth of new growth opportunities to businesses across Wales and we’ll continue to extend our full fibre network even further throughout the country.”

[A level and Welsh Baccalaureate students congratulated by Kirsty Williams](#)

The A level provisional results for Wales show an improvement overall with 8.7% of grades awarded at A*, the best outcome in Wales since this grade was introduced, in 2010, 0.4 percentage point higher than the previous best figure in 2017.

In the other figures from today’s results:

- 76.3% gained A* to C, the highest since 2009 and the second highest

recorded with 26.3% achieving A*-A, a historic high.

- Maths has the highest pass rate of any key subject with 42.2% gaining A* to A.
- There have been increases at A* in Physics, Biology, Chemistry, Arts and Design, Psychology, Geography, Religious Studies and English Language.
- At A* to C the results have gone up in English Literature, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, History, Art and Design, Sociology and Business Studies.
- The overall average for all Subjects shows the performance of both male and females learners has improved across most grades.

The Welsh Baccalaureate results show:

- 97.7% of candidates achieved the Skills Challenge Certificate, an increase of 3.7 percentage points from 2017.
- 80.9% of candidates passed the Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate, an increase of 2.2 percentage points from 2017.

On a visit to Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Glantaf in Llandaff, Kirsty Williams said:

“Today is the culmination of a lot of hard work from our students and I want to congratulate them, as well as our fantastic teachers and lecturers, on these results.

“We’re seeing a very positive and stable set of results, with some very encouraging signs of progress as we continue on our journey of education reform.

“I’m very pleased that the number of students achieving A*-A has reached 26.3% – this is a 1.3% increase from last year and is an historic high for Wales.

“It’s also particularly pleasing to see an increase in the number of students taking STEM subjects. This is the continuation of a trend we’ve seen in recent years.

“Welsh Baccalaureate Advanced Level pass rates are also up which is excellent news – this is a valued qualification accepted by a growing number of prestigious universities across the UK.

“These are all very good reasons why we should remain confident in our reformed system of qualifications. We are providing students with the skills and knowledge they need for the modern world and our challenge now is to build on the results as we continue our national mission to raise standards for all our young people.”

Over £1.5m investment in Port Talbot landmark to support town centre regeneration

Rebecca Evans, Minister for Housing and Regeneration, announced the funding to create high-spec office space in the listed building, through the Welsh Government's £110m Building for the Future Fund.

Rebecca Evans said:

"Our investment, together with the support from Neath Port Talbot local authority will transform the former Magistrate's Court to create the Terminus. The building will provide modern, flexible office accommodation to attract further economic investment.

"The development will also provide training and employment opportunities to disadvantaged groups by linking with employability projects such as Workways+ and Communities for Work, which are also being backed by EU and Welsh Government funding.

"This part of Port Talbot is benefiting from significant redevelopment and regeneration, with improved transport links thanks to the new integrated transport hub and the development of Harbourside, part of the Port Talbot Enterprise Zone.

"There is a real demand for good quality office space to help local businesses grow and develop and I believe this investment will be a springboard for business success from the town."

Funding for the Terminus development includes around £500,000 from the Welsh Government and £1m of EU funds.

Building for the Future is regenerating town centres and surrounding areas in Wales by refurbishing or redeveloping derelict or under-used land and buildings and bringing them back to life.

The multi-million pound Fund, supported by £38m of EU funding and £16m from the Welsh Government is supporting schemes to drive business growth, create employment and increase footfall in town centres. Schemes supported through Building for the Future are being match funded from a range of public, third and private sector sources.

[New £6m Sustainable Production grant round for on-farm nutrient management and storage to open](#)

The fourth window of the SPG will give farmers the opportunity to take the lead in tackling agri-pollution to improve water, soil and air quality.

Grants will range from £12,000 to £50,000 as a maximum 40% contribution to project costs. The items supported will include, amongst other things, covered slurry storage and management equipment.

The SPG will only provide support where the investment exceeds compliance with slurry storage regulations, achieving a minimum storage capacity of 160 days, regardless of any existing on-farm storage.

The next round of the Sustainable Production Grant is planned to open on 3 September and closes 26 October. Contracts are due to start January 2019 and be claimed by August 2021.

Speaking ahead of the Pembrokeshire Show, the Cabinet Secretary said:

“The impacts of on-farm pollution affecting water quality and wildlife have increased recently, often due to poor slurry storage and dirty water handling facilities.

“The level of interest we have had in each Sustainable Production Grant round has demonstrated farmers are willing to invest in their farm businesses to become more sustainable, prosperous and resilient.

“Our next round of the SPG will focus on supporting farmers to deliver our objectives of enhanced nutrient management, safeguarding and improving water, soil and air quality by reducing pollution. The investment will support farmers to address these important issues and ensure current and future generations continue to benefit from our natural resources.”

The Cabinet Secretary will attend the first day of the Pembrokeshire Show, undertaking a range of events and meetings and wants to hear the views of farmers, Unions and partners about the Welsh Government’s recently launched proposals on future support for farmers in Wales after Brexit.

At the start of July, the Cabinet Secretary launched a 16 week consultation [Brexit and our Land](#), which proposes a new Land Management programme to replace the Common Agricultural Policy in Wales once the UK leaves the EU.

The new Land Management Programme will consist of two large and flexible

schemes – the Economic Resilience Scheme and the Public Goods Scheme.

Welsh Government officials will hold drop in sessions at the Welsh Government trailer providing an opportunity for farmers and the public to come along to find out more about the consultation and give their views.

The Cabinet Secretary added:

“Brexit brings with it significant challenges and opportunities. I have been clear maintaining the status quo is not an option and the Basic Payment Scheme will come to an end in Wales once the UK leaves the EU.

“We are currently consulting on our proposals for a new ‘made-in-Wales’ Land Management Programme which aims to keep farmers farming and ensure they thrive in a post Brexit world. This is 16 week, meaningful consultation which will help inform our plans.

“This year’s Pembrokeshire Show will be the last before we leave the EU. My message is simple – there has never been a more important time to get involved and help us shape the future of farming in Wales. I look forward to visiting the Show and hearing as many views as possible on our proposals.”

Bangor University secures further EU funding for new research hub

The EU funding will support scientific research and technology in establishing the university’s Shellfish Centre to help grow the industry in Wales.

It will support improvements to coastal water quality; the adoption of new technology and production methods and expansion into new markets – all priorities for Wales’ shellfish industry.

Based at the Marine Centre Wales, the Shellfish Centre will build on Bangor University’s excellence in coastal and marine sciences.

Over the next 3 years, around 20 businesses in Wales are expected to take part in scientific research programmes to support the growth of the shellfish industry in Wales.

The Finance Secretary said:

“EU-funded research is playing a vital role in maximising the expertise within our universities so Welsh businesses are at the forefront of science and technology.

“This investment will drive business competitiveness leading to the development of a strong and sustainable shellfish industry in Wales.”

Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs Secretary Lesley Griffiths said:

“This is a valuable industry which already provides significant economic benefits to Wales and has the potential to grow further with support from the scientific research and technological expertise of our universities.”

Professor Lewis Le Vay, from Bangor University, added:

“We have a long and successful track record of collaborative research with Welsh shellfish producers and are very pleased this new and exciting initiative provides an opportunity for us to build on these very productive relationships.

“Our long-term aim is for the legacy of the Shellfish Centre to be a sustainable and growing shellfish production and processing sector in Wales. Supported by a science and innovation partnership, this initiative will help place Welsh shellfish producers in a leading position in the UK and internationally.”

James Wilson, of Bangor Mussel Producers, said:

“Our ability to withstand the impact of Brexit will, in part, depend on having the highest-quality scientific understanding of resources and the marine environment. This investment in the shellfish centre should very much help deliver that.”