

Employment Plan

Meirionnydd

NEWSLETTER WINTER 2015



INSIDE

BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR FOOD COMPANY | BLAENAU GOES ELECTRIC | LLANBEDR TAKES FLIGHT | ENTREPRENEURS LEAD THE WAY



Foreword

from Mandy Williams-Davies,
Gwynedd Council Cabinet Member for the economy



It is my pleasure to present the third edition of the Meirionnydd Employment Plan newsletter to update you about the developments in the Meirionnydd area. As the Gwynedd Council Cabinet Member for the Economy, I have visited many businesses in the area over the last period. I am very proud to report that a wide programme of investments is being implemented by the private sector, social initiatives and the public sector, which will address the economic challenges that face the Meirionnydd area.

It was a pleasure to visit the Brighter Foods company in Tywyn and have the opportunity to meet Robin Williams, the Chief Executive, to see how much progress has been made in the company's development since it was established in 2014. Through innovation, the company has grown quickly and currently employs over 100 workers. The company now hopes to stabilise and take root in the area.

The work to develop the Llanbedr site as a centre of excellence for testing and developing Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS) continues, with significant physical and infrastructure improvements already made on the site. In the autumn this year, "Project Meredith" will be implemented, which will showcase civil RPAS in Llanbedr and concentrate on environmental monitoring, managing fisheries and monitoring coastal erosion. This will be the first project of its kind in the UK, which ensures that Wales is at the forefront of the campaign to develop civil applications for autonomous systems.

The development offers an opportunity to fulfil the need to improve the site entrance, which has been identified for several years. Over recent months, a consultation has been held to evaluate the different options that are available to develop a new road and a new route has now been decided upon.

The site has also been included on the short-list for the UK's first proposed Space Portal, which is a very exciting development for Wales. The site has all the necessary features to be able to submit a very strong case and I look forward to learning more about the opportunities that could come as a result. The application process is yet to begin, and we foresee that detailed requirements will be released before the end of the year.

There have also been changes at the Trawsfynydd site. A new parent body was appointed to manage Magnox in 2014, namely Cavendish Fluor Partnership (CFP). Since then, they have been reviewing the staffing levels that are needed to complete the work before the site reaches a point of "Care and Maintenance",

which is the next step in the decommissioning process. CFP are of the opinion that this work can be completed with fewer workers than was originally predicted.

Furthermore, aspects of the work that was being undertaken through contracts with external companies have been completed. As a result, a significant number of workers have recently lost their jobs on the site, some of them sooner than expected. We will continue to make every effort to attract new industry to the site and work in the region for the workers.

Once again this year, Gwynedd Business Week was held in May. The Business Week promotes and celebrates local business successes, as well as providing an excellent opportunity for the area's companies to meet, network and share ideas. The fact that so many businesses from Meirionnydd were represented in the events was very encouraging and congratulations once again to Chris Allwood from the Welsh Slate Company, Louis Hiatt from Scrubadub Cleaning, Aberdyfi, Gareth and Sioned Llewelyn Williams of Parciau Gwyliau Y Bala and Sean Taylor of ZipWorld Blaenau Ffestiniog.

In July, Pont Briwet was officially opened by pupils from Ysgol Cefn Coch, Penrhyndeudraeth, and Ysgol Talysarnau. Gwynedd Council and Network Rail worked together to build a new bridge over the River Dwyryd near Penrhyndeudraeth. The bridge is modern, safe and sustainable, and features a railway track, two lanes for vehicles and a foot and cycle path. Although the building period was very challenging for the area's residents and businesses, the new structure will provide better access for businesses, workers and visitors along the Cambrian coast. The exciting £21 million project was partly financed by the European Regional Development Fund, which is administered by the Welsh Government, as well as TraCC, Network Rail and Gwynedd Council.

This edition features information about several ongoing projects to improve the economic climate in Meirionnydd.

A bright future for a food company, Electrifying Blaenau, Llanbedr Flying and Entrepreneurs Leading the Way.

I hope that you enjoy reading about the valuable work and the exciting developments that are afoot in Meirionnydd.

A bright start for healthy snacks

A food company has created much-needed jobs in Meirionnydd by setting up a new factory making niche food products and healthy snacks.

Thanks in part to support from the Local Loans Fund, Brighter Foods will be using its new base in Tywyn as a hub to work with other companies across Europe.

The company, which now employs over 100 people, is hoping to capitalise on the boom in demand for gluten free, reduced sugar, low fat, diet control and sports nutrition products.

Chief executive Robin Williams said, "There's a great interest from customers and consumers and with our experienced and highly skilled team and manufacturing base in Tywyn, we are in the perfect position to take advantage of the demand and build a truly successful business and brand. "Everyone at Brighter Foods believes that now is

the perfect time to enter into the market for niche food and healthy snacks. We are now actively recruiting and plan to grow further in 2015, organically and via acquisition.

"It will be great to bring much needed employment to the Tywyn area. We are grateful to the Welsh Government who have supported our plans via Business Finance and Gwynedd Council's Local Loans Fund."

www.brighterfoods.co.uk

"We are now actively recruiting and plan to grow further in 2015."

Bikes scheme sparks to life

Electric bikes are a common sight in cities from Berlin to Beijing and now Blaenau Ffestiniog has joined the global charge thanks to a new electric bike hire scheme.

Run by social enterprise Antur Stiniog with support from Llwyddo yng Ngwynedd's Local Produce programme, the 250w bikes will be used to promote outdoor activities in Meirionnydd and encourage the use of bikes as a mode of transport around the area.

"Blaenau is a very rural town surrounded by mountains where public transport is minimal," said Helen McAteer from Antur Stiniog.

"Getting around is difficult so this project offers a great opportunity for locals and visitors to get around.

"There are several businesses on the outskirts of town and the electric bikes make it easier for people to reach them and hopefully give them

an economic boost. It will also improve the visitor experience and increase the chance of a return visit.

The bikes are available to hire from Y Siop, Antur Stiniog's new hub in the centre of Blaenau Ffestiniog. Y Siop is a commercial enterprise which houses an information centre and a retail outlet selling outdoor clothing, climbing equipment, bike equipment, bike hire and a variety of outdoor activity packages to suit locals and tourists.

"Since we opened our downhill tracks in 2012 we have attracted over 15,000 visitors and the aim is to increase this year-on-year by developing schemes such as the electric bike hire," added Helen.

www.anturstiniog.com

The power to succeed

Losing your job is never easy and the thought of having to retrain to start a new career can be daunting.

However, some Meirionnydd workers facing redundancy with the decommissioning of Trawsfynydd nuclear power station are thriving having turned their hands to more traditional skills thanks to the Shaping the Future programme.

One of those is Harry Guttridge from the Trawsfynydd site. He is currently a consultant radiation protection adviser but took advantage of the project by acquiring qualifications and experience in sheep shearing, hedge laying, tree felling and chainsaw work. He has since started up his own business - Tegid Ltd - fitting in seasonal rural crafts around his desk based nuclear projects.

Harry said: "I loved the physicality of the work and found it took me to all sorts of beautiful places off the beaten track. I've also met some interesting characters along the way! The shearing takes place over the summer months and the hedges can only be laid in the winter when the birds have finished nesting. This means I can do outdoors work almost all year round.

"Nuclear sites tend to be in remote areas like Snowdonia so I always expect to have the opportunity to use these rural crafts wherever the



Harry Guttridge has set up his own business - Tegid Ltd.

nuclear consultancy takes me. At the moment it is little more than a hobby as I gain experience and build up contacts but I hope with time to expand that side of the business."

Shaping the Future has helped more than 1,000 nuclear plant employees to develop their skills and prepare for the future. The three-year project has been backed with £2.3m from the European Social Fund, £1.2m from the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA), funding from the Môn a Menai Regeneration Fund through the Welsh Government and additional funding from Anglesey and Gwynedd County Councils.

If given the opportunity, wood you?

The beauty of timber is not lost on Elis Garmon Jones from Llanuwchllyn. This enterprising Meirionnydd teenager was inspired to start his own business – Buarthau'r Barcud - following his success in a woodwork competition in a local show four years ago.

He is also one of 853 separate individuals to date who have received a bursary of £1000 after working with a Llwyddo'n Lleol Development Officer to complete a business plan.

Given his farming background it may come as no surprise that Elis has been building mini farmyards and sheds as toys for his younger brother. Using scrap wood from a local mill, Elis has been honing his skills on a hobby-level, and is now ready to go into business. With the bursary, Elis is now able to buy good quality tools, gain skills and boost his confidence to take his business ideas to the next level.

Elis is already thinking about his future and would like to become a carpenter one day. Receiving the Llwyddo'n Lleol bursary has given Elis the boost that he needs to turn his hobby into a business.



Young entrepreneur Elis Garmon Jones

Elis is a very busy young entrepreneur as he will manage running his own business while working on his family's farm.

Llanbedr takes flight

A number of significant milestones have been reached in the regeneration of Llanbedr Airfield over the past twelve months, providing a firm foundation for the long-term sustainable development of the site.

An investment of over £1.5m by Llanbedr Airfield Estates (LAE), QinetiQ and the Welsh Government is delivering tangible results and laying the foundations to attract further investment and jobs.

Officially launched in October 2014 by site owners LAE in partnership with QinetiQ, Llanbedr is now open for business as part of the Snowdonia Enterprise Zone. The successful development and integration of processes and procedures for airspace management and airfield services will see the resumption of remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS) test flight operations.

The long-term aim is to re-establish Llanbedr Airfield as a centre of excellence for test and development flying of remotely piloted systems

and expand the capability for this sector in Wales, complementing existing infrastructure such as West Wales UAV Centre at Aberporth.

The airfield has a long and established association with remotely piloted aircraft systems that dates back to the 1940s. From the 1960s the airfield was the main operating base for the Jindivik system used to tow targets within the 7,500 sq kilometres of segregated air space over Cardigan Bay.

To date the air traffic control tower and the new dedicated RPAS Hangar (former fire station) have undergone a total refurbishment. Refuelling facilities and fire cover are on site, ultra fast broadband is being installed and new security measures will commence shortly. Fly Llanbedr and Airborne Solutions are the latest companies to invest in Llanbedr Airfield, bringing the total number of businesses on site to 12 employing in the region of 40/50 people.



The sky's the limit for Meirionnydd youngsters

More than 30 pupils from Ysgol y Moelwyn, Blaenau Ffestiniog and Ysgol Ardudwy, Harlech attended a youth engagement event at the Llanbedr Aviation Centre to promote the possible career opportunities available to them within the field of aviation and robotics.

The event, arranged through the EU-backed £3.4 million Llwyddo'n Lleol project and the Snowdonia Enterprise Zone, was an opportunity to draw attention to the importance of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM subjects) and the career path they can offer Gwynedd pupils.

During the day, pupils were given the opportunity to visit the Llanbedr Aviation Centre and Enterprise Park, and to meet with local employers within the sector.

As part of the event, the pupils heard from Mark Norris, Head of Aerospace and Defence at the Welsh Government, as well as a Show and Tell Session by Jeremy Howitt from QinetiQ who explained the unique characteristics of the site, and outlined potential opportunities for development.

The local pupils also had the opportunity to meet professionals and ask them about their experiences in the sector.

A number of work stations included Llanbedr-based aviation company Fly Llanbedr; a discussion about career opportunities in aviation by site owners Llanbedr Airfield Estates; Emma Hodgetts from



Up-close inspection of an aeroplane for pupils attending the youth engagement day

QinetiQ who discussed pathways to engineering; Kevin Titley, STEM Ambassador from Magnox; Andrew Taylor, STEM Ambassador from Wylfa and Jessica Jones, Female Engineer of the Year 2012.

The day was rounded-off with a presentation and quiz by Sue Wolfe from Callen Lenz / ARPAS-UK.

Community hub gives Bala a boost

A community-led venture to attract public services and businesses back to Bala has opened a new community hub for local people.

With support from the Sustainable Communities programme, Cwmni Pum Plwy Penllyn has re-developed the Henblas Centre on Bala's High Street into a centre for business and local community services, creating office space, conference facilities and meeting space.

Huw Antur, company secretary said, "Our vision is that Henblas Centre will be a valuable resource for the whole community - the town of Bala and the surrounding areas.

"One of the main intentions was to bring services to the area and closer to the people - services that people currently have to travel to find.

"Another aim is to provide office space for businesses and a venue for meetings and small events."

The company is working in partnership with organisations such as those in the field of health and welfare services, with over 15 organisations having shown an interest in using the resources available in the centre on a casual or occasional basis.

Behind the project is Cwmni Pum Plwy Penllyn, a not for profit limited company set up to promote social and economic growth in the Penllyn area. It is already responsible for various amenities in the area including car parks and toilets.

www.canolfanhenblas.com



Henblas Centre on Bala's High Street

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NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTORS

