A WALES OF COHESIVE COMMUNITIES

A Wales of cohesive communities

"Attractive, safe, viable and well-connected"

'Well-connected' these days means having access to the latest technology. Who could have predicted less than five years ago how central to our lives being connected to the web would be?

MENTER MÔN Ers 1995

Technology has become a big part of our daily lives and we depend on it in so many ways. This has especially been the case with so many of us working from home.

However, connectivity isn't always great in rural communities and often, high speed broadband is unavailable. We've been looking at opportunities to help get some of these areas in Gwynedd and Anglesey online.

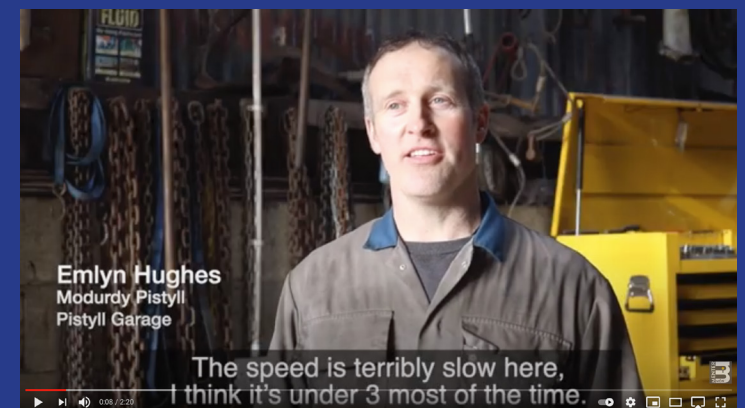One of the schemes was to give community centres and key workers free **4G devices** so that they could access the internet during lockdown. Funded by the Welsh Government, the aim was to ensure that people and places that were part of the local response to Covid19 could use technology to carry out vital work.

Some of the centres that benefited from the project are Siop Mechell in Llanfechell, Anglesey and Blaenau Ffestiniog Town Council, as well as several care homes.

Gwenan Griffiths is a social services officer at Gwynedd Council and was one of the key workers who was able to access the 4G routers through the scheme. She explains: "We live in such a remote area; the phone and internet signal is at best weak. And with all the family at home working and doing schoolwork, the situation got even worse. I'm so grateful that we had better access through this scheme. It meant that I didn't have to do my work in the early hours, before the children woke up as it allowed more than one of us to use the internet at the same time."

Another scheme which falls under the theme of connectivity is 'SuperFast' which helps communities take action to improve their broadband speed. Unreliable connection can be frustrating for us all, but for a business it can mean the difference between success and failure.

We've been working with people from different communities, supporting them to register on BT Openreach, Connect My Community's website to claim Welsh Government vouchers to install fibre, upgrade network hubs and exchange equipment. One of these communities is Pistyll in Gwynedd. Watch below to see how important it is to have good bandwidth connection for the people and businesses in the area.

nor did it allow the two children that are in school to do their schoolwork.

Emlyn Hughes
Modurdy Pistyll
Pistyll Garage

The speed is terribly slow here, I think it's under 3 most of the time.

In addition to this work, we've been targeting towns to improve their connectivity using a system called 'Patrwm'. The project has already installed free Wi-Fi in eight Gwynedd towns and a similar scheme has just been launched in Llangefni.

'Patrwm' gives shoppers and people who visit local towns access to free Wi-Fi. It can also track how people move around a town and the time they spend on the high street. The information collected can then be used to plan the future of the high street, looking at people's habits and requirements.

The scheme is part of the wider **Trefi SMART towns** programme which monitors town centres across Wales. The technology is used to make town planning decisions by using data to look at people's behaviours. With Covid19's effect being felt in our town centres it is hoped that Patrwm and Trefi SMART Towns can help in their regeneration plans in the future.

Even though internet connectivity is very important, there is so much more to the work of creating cohesive communities. Here's a taste of some of the other projects that have been keeping us busy lately.

Bro Môn
A scheme that supports social enterprises across Anglesey – and as an experienced social enterprise, Menter Môn was pleased to support the project with funding from the LEADER scheme. Inspired by Cwmni Bro Ffestiniog, it provides new opportunities to share experiences on how to establish and run a social enterprise.

Want to know more?
Visit **www.bromon.cymru**

GOFOD

Empty buildings can be a problem for our communities, even more so following the pandemic with increasing pressures on business and community groups. Tackling this is at the heart of the new GOFOD scheme which aims to add value to empty buildings in Gwynedd. We're keen to work with groups and individuals to develop ideas to create spaces that can be used as offices, art studios or creative spaces. We've appealed for expressions of interests and eight locations have already been in touch hoping to benefit from the scheme. We'll bring you more news on Gofod as the project progresses.

Carwyn and Carwen

For those of you who aren't familiar with Carwyn and Carwen – they are community electric cars. A project under our Arloesi Gwynedd Wledig banner, the cars are located at Penygroes and Llanaelhaearn and are available for hire. The scheme aims to trial the concept of community car share in rural areas to help people who are isolated and also to promote sustainable travel.

During the pandemic, the cars were also used by volunteers to take people to medical appointments, to go shopping and to deliver essential medical equipment to vulnerable people living in Gwynedd.