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Shaping the future of education

THE first-ever National Education Union (NEU) Cymru policy-making conference was held at the Celtic Manor Resort.

Officers and representatives from the 24 branches and districts in Wales attended the two-day event, where 23 motions from seven different sections on important issues such as workload, the new curriculum, the devolution of pay and conditions and funding were debated.

The conference was chaired by Kiri Tunks, NEU joint national president, and guest speakers included Kevin Courtney, NEU joint general secretary, and Kirsty Williams, Minister for Education.

NEU Cymru policy officer Stuart Williams said: "This was a historic conference. As we now have a fully devolved education system it's vitally important that our members here in Wales decide what issues they want to raise with the Welsh Government and, in particular, the Minister for Education.



Some of the NEU Cymru staff who made the conference a success

PHOTOS by Carmen Valino

"We look forward to working closely with the Government to address the issues that were agreed."

■ The policy-making conference will now be an annual event with the next due to be held in November.



Speakers included NEU joint president Kiri Tunks and Kirsty Williams, Minister for Education



Minister backs lifelong learning

NEU Cymru has welcomed the Minister for Education, Kirsty Williams', commitment to lifelong learning.

NEU Cymru Secretary David Evans said: "Access to lifelong learning is hugely important for Wales. We were heartened to hear that part of the Minister for Education's Progressive Agreement with the new First Minister, includes a commitment to exploring the right to lifelong learning.

"If we are serious about the new curriculum aim for our children and young people to be 'ambitious and capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives', then it is critical that everyone across Wales has access to lifelong learning.

"Our members in further education and lifelong learning will be keen to work with the Cabinet Secretary and help her to shape a future where individuals are enabled to return to education throughout their lives.

"Adult and community learning has seen particular challenges in terms of funding, which will need to be addressed if aims are to be realised."

WULF funding allows more training for members

NEU Cymru has once again been successful in its application to the Wales Union Learning Fund (WULF).

The union wants to continue delivering training, with a focus on four main priority areas, namely:

- essential skills;
- career progression and development;
- health and wellbeing;
- Welsh language learning.

Beth Roberts, who was appointed as the project co-ordinator in 2016, will continue to be responsible for the development of the learning strategy for NEU Cymru.

NEU Cymru policy officer Stuart Williams, who oversaw the application, said: "This means that we can continue to ensure that NEU members will receive the training and support they need and deserve for the next three years.

"With the aid of this funding, NEU Cymru can continue to provide essential lifelong learning for its members."

Learning dates for your diary

LEARNING is at the heart of NEU Cymru and the union takes pride in the training that we provide for education professionals, local officers and workplace representatives.

The union represents the largest group of education professionals in Wales and its belief in the power of learning for all is reflected in our provision of learning opportunities for NEU Cymru members.

TRAINING FOR REPS

The union's one- and three-day training courses for all new and existing workplace reps have been a great success, as they give reps the tools and confidence to make a real difference to members' lives.

Having listened to feedback received from those reps who have already attended, a significant change has been made to the way the courses are delivered.

Foundation and advanced reps courses are now available in the usual full three-day course, where reps will attend for all three days in one block, or you can choose to attend the modular course where all three days will be done separately over a period of time.

Foundation courses

6-8 March – three-day course – St David's Hotel, Cardiff

8 March – modular course, day 1 – Gwynedd (venue TBC)

15 March – modular course, day 2 – Gwynedd (venue TBC)

22 March – modular course, day 3 – Gwynedd (venue TBC)

15 March – modular course, day 1 – Future Inns, Cardiff

14 June – modular course, day 2 – Future Inns, Cardiff

13 September – modular course, day 3 – Future Inns, Cardiff

Advanced courses

19-21 June – three-day course – Village Hotel, Cardiff

Employment law

4 March – Conwy (venue TBC)

10 May – The Bear Hotel, Cowbridge

Workload and wellbeing

12 July – Future Inns, Cardiff

26 July – Flintshire (venue TBC)

If you're interested in becoming a school rep and attending one of the courses, email lisa.williams@neu.org.uk at the NEU Cymru office – and remember, reps are legally entitled to attend this training.

The NEU will support any rep who has difficulties getting time off work to attend.

TRAINING FOR MEMBERS

LEGO story starter & animation workshops

6 March – Eden Education Centre, Aberbeeg

Digital competency framework seminar

8 March – a showcase of apps and webtools – UWTSO Carmarthen

Mindfulness taster session

13 March – Ysgol Maesydre, Welshpool

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)

15 March – three-hour course – Future Inns, Cardiff

These are the last courses available through the current WULF project, which comes to an end on 31 March.

Courses organised through the new WULF project (see WULF story, left), which commences on 1 April, will be advertised in due course.

If you're interested in any of the above courses, email beth.roberts@neu.org.uk

Check your email inbox for information on the latest training opportunities. Like us on Facebook at facebook.com/neucymrutraining, follow us on Twitter at [@neucymrutrain](https://twitter.com/neucymrutrain) and visit neu.org.uk/learning-and-events



‘Illegal and harmful’ air pollution

AIR pollution is usually considered an environmental issue, but it’s now a public health crisis.

People in towns and cities across Wales are breathing in levels of air pollution that are illegal and harmful for their health.


The British Lung Foundation has been focussing its efforts on children because they are one of the groups of people most at risk from air pollution. Polluted air could be causing children to miss school due to illness,

and it can stunt the growth of their lungs. It can also increase the likelihood of asthma and health problems later on in life.

The foundation has developed guidance for schools and is calling on governments to take action to clean up the air we breathe.

The guidance can be found at neu.org.uk/air-pollution

Find out how you can help by supporting the campaign on Twitter @BLFWales or by visiting blf.org.uk/take-action/campaign/clean-air



Air pollution guidance for school staff

Why do we need this guidance?

Levels of air pollution across the UK are at unsafe and illegal levels. Every year in the UK, it's estimated that the equivalent of 40,000 early deaths can be linked to breathing polluted air. Air pollution can stunt the growth of babies' and children's lungs. It can put them at risk from long-term lung damage, both at school and as they travel to school.

We've produced this guidance so school leaders, school staff, governing bodies, local authorities and academy trusts can work together to protect pupils and meet relevant **health and safety legislation**.

How does air pollution affect children?

Children are extremely vulnerable as they tend to breathe faster than adults, and their lungs are still growing.

Air pollution is hugely damaging for all our health. From conception throughout our lives, being exposed to air pollution can increase everyone's risk of getting lung cancer and cardiovascular disease.

Tackling the effects of workload on wellbeing

NEU Cymru has welcomed the Minister for Education's statement that the wellbeing of staff is as important as that of learners.

NEU Cymru secretary David Evans said "The wellbeing of both learners and education professionals is hugely important for education in Wales. The minister acknowledged this and we look forward to the Welsh Government delivering on these promises and making schools 'a happy place to work and learn in'.

"Our National Mission places huge expectations on education

professionals, especially in terms of workload, which can have a knock-on effect on wellbeing.

"We have big changes in terms of the new curriculum, a new law on additional learning needs, changes to assessments and many other expectations at a time when budgets are tight.

"We hope, therefore, that the minister will realise her aim, and that workload for education professionals will be given the attention it deserves."

Here to help

As the largest education union, NEU Cymru can offer members an unrivalled service.

Our professional team is here to provide expertise to our network of workplace representatives and district and branch secretaries.

If you have a problem at work or want to know more about member services, contact:

- your workplace representative;
- your branch secretary;
- Adviceline;
- NEU Cymru office.

NEU Cymru

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District and Branch delegates enjoying our first NEU Cymru Conference

PHOTO by Carmen Valino

Changes planned to 'assess online' not test

THE union has welcomed the Secretary for Education's plan to replace the National Reading and Numeracy tests with Personalised Assessments.

NEU Cymru opposed the introduction of national testing back in 2012 and has consistently voiced concerns over the rationale behind them.

Hopes for less marking for teachers

The new Personalised Assessments will be conducted online and can adapt to the child's level of understanding.

This is a critical part to the Welsh Government delivering on its National Mission and a move towards assessment for learning, rather than testing.

NEU Cymru secretary David Evans

said: "Online adaptive testing should replace paper-based assessments, and we hope this will mean a reduced workload for teachers having to mark the assessments.

"However, it is critical that this is properly supported by funding and training for schools, and recognition that assessments may take much longer as each child will be doing these individually.

"Clear guidance will also be needed about how these assessments are used. From our perspective, these are to assist the classroom teacher and education professionals in the school to meet the needs of learners.

"They should not be collected and used to 'rank' the school, as we have seen the negative impact this can have on both pupils and professionals."