

Assembly Briefing

'Winner of the IPR Cymru Wales Community Campaign 2005'

Issue No. 17



Welcome to our latest Assembly Briefing.

As the summer approaches this issue turns to enjoying broadband on the move, looking at the new developments for Wi-Fi and the additional benefits it will bring to Cardiff following our recent announcement that the city has been designated one of BT's 12 Wireless Cities across the UK. It is the latest step in our continuing partnership with Cardiff Council, bringing the latest technologies and significant investment to the city.

We also take a look at a number of new initiatives that see BT's Welsh language services leap into the 21st century, with BT leading the way for other companies in the private sector.

Also, BT is assisting in the communities of Wales by supporting Welsh Women's Aid through technology and helping older people get on line through its new partnership with Age Concern.

We hope that our Assembly Briefing is of interest to you, and that it helps to keep you informed about what we are doing in Wales. We value your feedback, and we would be grateful if you could take some time to answer the questions in the enclosed questionnaire, to help us make sure that it continues to be of value to you. In return we will donate £1 for every questionnaire returned to Age Concern Cymru.



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Wi-Fi City

Thanks to a new deal with Cardiff Council, Wi-Fi coverage is set to expand across the city as part of BT's Wireless City Initiative.

Two years ago the city centre became the first in the UK to offer extensive Wi-Fi coverage. Now, as part of BT's Wireless City initiative, and with the support of Cardiff Council, BT Openzone is set to be extended to cover up to four square kilometres of the city centre, placing such sites as the university buildings and other major areas of Cardiff within reach.

The Wireless City network will bring together the very latest technologies and applications for use by public services, businesses and people. Higher bandwidth and greater intelligence being built into the wireless broadband network will allow more buildings in the city to be linked up using Wi-Fi and offer new services such as wireless CCTV.

People will be able to use the network on a range of devices for entertainment, education and communication, such as email, video and voice calls, even when they're on the move.

Cllr Mark Stevens, Executive Member for Economic Development and Finance at Cardiff Council, said: "This is an exciting development for both the business community and people of Cardiff. Innovation and technology are at the heart of the Council's vision for the future of the City and to successfully deliver upon that vision we need access to the latest business and communications infrastructure."



A skilled team for Openreach

Openreach, the new multi-billion business responsible for the nationwide local BT communications network, has been building up a skilled Welsh workforce as a key part of its recipe for success.

Two of BT's most senior engineers in Wales have been appointed to lead the 1300 people who work for Openreach. Paul Taylor will run the day to day operations in South Wales and Peter Grant will look after north and west Wales.

Openreach has also begun the recruitment of more than 100 new engineers in Wales in preparation for a major upgrade of the local network which will focus on mid and north Wales. The recruitment will also include ten new apprentices.



In addition Openreach will be providing first rate training for the engineers and apprentices at BT's skill centre at Cross Hands. Carmarthen East and Dinefwr's Adam Price MP and Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM recently visited the skill centre, to see at first hand the skills and training required by engineers for the wide range of work they undertake every day on Wales's communications network.

At the centre, Adam Price MP said, "I am pleased that Openreach is investing in the people of Carmarthenshire and Wales. It is creating job opportunities for local people and developing apprentices to help address local issues. I am sure that the work Openreach is undertaking will not only help create jobs in the area, but also to help develop and provide the best technology available in the constituency." Rhodri Glyn Thomas added, "This is a centre of excellence that will help provide engineers with the necessary training and skills required to provide an essential service to the people of Carmarthenshire."

BT brings Welsh language services into 21st century

BT has again expanded its Welsh language services, by offering more services in Welsh for customers and leading the way for other companies in the private sector.

In response to customer demand, BT customers can now order broadband in Welsh by speaking to advisors at BT's Welsh Language Bureau on **0800 800 288**. In addition, BT has launched a Welsh language version of The Phone Book online service. The Phone Book online at www.bt.com/thephonebook/cymraeg is a dedicated link to BT's popular business and residential search facility, for Welsh speakers and will now recognise the place names of the majority of Welsh communities in Welsh.

BT will also be expanding upon BT Text, the service which allows mobile users to send messages to landlines, in order to account for more Welsh words. This follows after Dr Who star Tom Baker, the voice of BT's new call service, was caught out by the Wales on Sunday who sent ten messages containing Welsh place names and common Welsh words. According to the paper, Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwyllyllantysiliogogoch made him sound as though he had "enjoyed a night on the tiles!" Now Tom is to return to the studio to record some Welsh pronunciations.

These recent developments add to BT's comprehensive Welsh language service operated from its dedicated Welsh Language Bureau in Bangor. Endorsing BT's Welsh language services, Alun Pugh, Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport, said, "BT is a great example of a company which is leading the way in the services it offers in both the national languages of Wales. With an increasing number of people learning Welsh, it's also important that the number of opportunities to use the language in everyday life increases and this is a positive example for other companies who work in Wales to follow."



65% of small companies in Wales fall victim to mis-selling or 'slamming'

65% of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in Wales have been subject to the mis-selling of telecom services - compared to 59% of all UK SMEs - making it one of the worst hit UK nations or regions.

New figures published by BT reveal a 13% rise in attempted mis-selling nationwide over the last seven months, making telecoms the most commonly mis-sold business service in the UK. Despite the attention focussed on the issue in recent months, 55% of SMEs in Wales say that at least every other day they receive apparent misleading or deceitful approaches from companies trying to sell them telecom services.

The most extreme form of the practice affecting businesses is "slamming", where an order is placed to switch their phone service to another company without their consent.

15% of all businesses surveyed said they had become victims. On average, they were stuck with the contract for more than 18 months and with the time and hassle involved plus any legal fees, the average estimated cost to the businesses affected was £791. 11% estimated it cost them even more - between £1,500 and £5,000!

These findings, which show that this issue is ever present, are part of a continuing BT campaign to raise the awareness of mis-selling with SMEs, and to help them to spot the warning signs. BT believes that it is the responsibility of everyone in the industry to work together to offer guidance and implement measures that will help safeguard SMEs from mis-selling practices and, to lead by example, BT has developed a dedicated section for businesses on its web site at www.bt.com/business/misselling

A Silver lining for Silver Surfers

BT is partnering with Age Concern to ensure that older people get online and make use of the internet.

In the wake of surprising new findings that reveal that despite talk of a boom in 'silver surfers', only 15% of older people have access to the internet. BT and Age Concern are teaming up to help older people reap the benefits of broadband and the internet with individual grants of up to £3,500.

An independent poll commissioned by Age Concern Cymru finds that in Wales today the older you are the less likely you are to have access to the Internet.

When asked for reasons why they didn't use the internet, the survey of people aged 65 or older said: they do not access the internet because they simply are not interested and because they do not understand the internet. Only a small percentage said that the reason they do not access the internet is because they can't afford it.

Commenting on the findings, Age Concern Cymru's Michael Phillips, said, "The poll findings clearly show that older people in Wales are getting left behind as the rest of the population in Wales embraces the Internet. This could have a hugely detrimental effect on the quality of life for older people, especially if public and private organisations continue to increase their reliance upon the Internet to deliver services to this group of people."

With more and more information and services going online, both Age Concern Cymru and BT Wales believe it is vital that older people in Wales are not digitally excluded. Therefore their new three year partnership worth £240,000 across the UK aims to help older people get online and learn about new technologies. Thanks to BT, Age Concern organisations in Wales can now access individual grants of up to £3,500 a year to fund projects providing support for older people in maximising the use of information and communications technology.

Commenting on the new partnership, Robert Taylor Director of Age Concern Cymru said, "We are delighted to be working with BT in trying to promote digital inclusion. With the help of BT we can deliver more IT training sessions at many Age Concerns across the country and get more older people online."



Hoax calls cost the Fire and Rescue Service millions a year!

Hoax calls are costing the Fire and Rescue Service a massive £11,000 a day in Wales - over £4 million a year - and the problem is potentially putting lives in danger.

Hoax Calls Awareness Week, an initiative coordinated by BT and supported by the Fire and Rescue Service, aims to raise nationwide awareness of this issue which delays response time to real emergencies and causes a significant drain on the service's resources.



Nearly 2,500 hoax fire calls are responded to every year by the Fire and Rescue Service in Wales. The Economic Cost of Fire report estimates that each hoax call costs £1,700, equating to £4m per year in Wales and a disturbing £84m per year in England and Wales! But this is not the only cost that is incurred - in 2005 BT answered over 28m 999 calls across the UK, of which 48% were identified as "inappropriate". Calls cost around 55p to process meaning more than £8m is added to the hoax call bill.

This is the second time BT have co-ordinated this initiative to raise awareness of the dangers of making hoax calls. Alongside press awareness, representatives from BT and the Fire and Rescue Service will be visiting schools across the UK. An educational DVD is also available to order online at www.bt.com/hoaxcalls

Sir Graham Meldrum, Head of Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate, said, "Young people in particular need to be aware what can happen if the fire brigade is called out under false pretences. The danger to others involved in a real emergency and the financial drain that they impose on a service that is there to save people's lives. Making a hoax call is illegal, and the penalties for making a call for 'fun' are high."

ICT boost for Welsh Women's Aid

Information Communications Technology (ICT) is essential for domestic abuse charity, Welsh Women's Aid. The charity, who represents 35 local Women's Aid groups across Wales, have been given a much needed boost of £1,500 plus implementation support to update its ICT systems by BT.

The charity badly needed to bolster its online resource and needed a server and PDF writer, which they simply could not afford. But thanks to BT, the charity now plans to improve its office communications equipment and has received additional implementation support and advice from local BT experts. The donation was also matched by the landlord for the Welsh Women's Aid, Cardiff office, Mr Lim of the Pheonix Garden.

Administration worker Sarah Murphy said Welsh Women's Aid was delighted to receive such a generous donation: "This money will provide a server for the office which will upgrade our IT service. We are a national umbrella organisation and are in constant touch with other organisations across Wales and this donation will help us to support a variety of groups and individuals throughout Wales."

BT has also provided consultation support for the new Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline website - www.wdah.org. The new website offers information about the free and confidential helpline, managed by Welsh Women's Aid, and what to expect when you contact the service. It also provides another way for Welsh Women's Aid to reach the people who need their service most.

Elen Pierce, Director of Welsh Women's Aid said, "One in four women in Wales and England will experience domestic abuse at some point in their lives, and it's vital that we continue to raise awareness of the Helpline. Up until now we've barely had any online presence at all, so we're absolutely delighted that we now have a website and hope that it will help us reach and support many more people in Wales who are living in fear."

For further information, log on to www.wdah.org or call the Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline on 0808 80 10 800.

For further information or queries relating to this newsletter please visit: www.bt.com/wales or email bt.wales.cymru@bt.com