

Demolition bittersweet but a symbol of building prosperity

YR wythnos ddi-wethaf fe welsom yr arwydd mwyaf amlwg eto o adfywiad economaidd Ynys Môn wrth i hen simnai Alwminiwm Môn gael ei dymchwel.

Mae'r simnai 120 metr o uchder ar Ynys Cybi, a oedd i'w gweld o bell am dros hanner can mlynedd, wedi ei chlririo i baratoi'r lle ar gyfer Parc Ffyniant Stena - fel rhan o Borthladd Rhydd newydd Ynys Môn.

LAST week we witnessed the most visible symbol yet of Anglesey's forthcoming economic renaissance when the old Anglesey Aluminium chimney was demolished.

The 120 metre high chimney which dominated the landscape of Holy Island for fifty years has been cleared to make way for Stena's Prosperity Parc - a key part of the new Anglesey Freeport.

This is the starting gun for the huge opportunity that is Ynys Môn's Freeport. I have worked for so many years to secure Freeport status and seeing it progress is a great moment.

As part of the UK Government's Levelling Up programme, Stena's Prosperity Parc will return this derelict land back into use - bringing investment, jobs and new opportunities here where they are most needed.

I have listened to what people here want and I have taken action: action to bring local jobs for local people, to give our young people hope for a future in our communities, and an island that is moving forwards not backwards. I know that for the past 30 years under Plaid Cymru and Labour MPs our communities have watched as large employers closed down and local people were forced to leave to find work elsewhere.

In just over four years, on my watch, the UK Government has approved Anglesey Freeport, invested in local regeneration projects and most recently announce its purchase of the Wylfa site in readiness for new nuclear operations. Millions of pounds are being invested here in Ynys Môn's future and my 'Local Jobs for Local People' campaign is making sure that the companies coming here will prioritise our local workforce.

Hundreds of people in and around Holyhead came out last Wednesday to watch the final moments of the "Tinto Chimney" from vantage points around the island. Video footage of it collapsing was taken

● Anglesey Aluminium chimney demolition. Picture by kind permission of local photographer Anthony Ward



from every angle and shared on social media, and the resounding boom as it finally hit the ground will be remembered for years to come.

I know that for many of us the felling of the chimney has been bittersweet. I have spoken with people about their memories of it from their childhood to those who worked at the smelter when it was one of our largest local employers and to those for whom it has long been a symbol that they have nearly reached home.

Despite those memories, this is a remarkable step for our island. Nothing shows how much progress we have made since I became your MP than demolishing the old to make way for the new. We are building our new future and it is a reason for celebration as we grasp the new opportunities we are being offered.

I was particularly delighted, in the 200th anniversary year of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), that the demolition of the chimney was used to raise more than £10,000 for this incredibly important charity.

To mark the event, Stena and the Anglesey Freeport team launched a draw with just one prize - to press the button that would finally bring down the chimney. In just seven days more than 900 tickets were purchased and all the proceeds have been donated to the RNLI in memory of local lifeboatman Iwan Williams who sadly passed away last year.



● Virginia Crosbie MP with RNLI Holyhead Coxswain Tony Price

The marking of the bicentenary of the RNLI is hugely significant for communities like ours where the sea is part of our daily lives. Our community has seen lives lost at sea for centuries and many of our lifeboat stations began life as private community initiatives in response to such events. The Cemlyn lifeboat was founded following fundraising by the Rev James Williams and his wife Frances who watched the ship Alert go down off north-west Anglesey in 1823 with the loss of 140 lives.

Cemaes Bay Harbourmaster, Dafydd Williams, has told me that during the 19th and 20th century there used to be 13 RNLI lifeboats on Anglesey. With improvements in technology these smaller lifeboat operations in communities like Penmon, Cemlyn, Rhoscolyn, Cemaes, Bull Bay and Rhosneigr have been superseded

and there are now four lifeboat stations with two All Weather lifeboats at Moelfre and Holyhead and in-shore boats at Trearddur and Beaumaris.

Between them these four stations have given over 500 years of service and their brave volunteers have been awarded more than 100 RNLI medals for gallantry.

These include the late Moelfre Coxswain Richard Evans BEM. Dick served for 50 years and was involved in the saving of over 250 lives. He is one of only five men to be awarded the RNLI gold medal twice, the highest accolade awarded by the institution and the equivalent of the Victoria Cross for bravery at sea.

Most recently in 2022 the crew of Trearddur Bay lifeboat received medals for the rescue of a female surfer during gale force 9 winds on 20 May 2021. Helmsman Lee Duncan

received a silver medal with Dafydd Griffiths, Leigh McCann and Michael Doran being awarded bronze medals in a rescue described as "one of the finest acts of selflessness and courage of recent times" in a 50mph storm.

Earlier this year in Holyhead station, full time Coxswain Tony Price announced his retirement from the role although he will continue as a volunteer. In his time Tony has dealt with significant incidents including saving the Christopher Pearce lifeboat when Holyhead marina was destroyed in Storm Emma. Tony comes from a family with a long history of volunteering for the RNLI.

Last year Anglesey singing sensation, Ren Gill, visited Beaumaris Lifeboat Station after raising more than £15,000 for the local RNLI in recognition of their work searching for his best friend Joe to whom he dedicated his album Freckled Angels.

The RNLI is part of my community's DNA - from Graham Drinkwater who laid the foundations for Trearddur Bay lifeboat station to its chairman Jack Abbott who was awarded a Royal Humane Society testimonial for using his skills to rescue and resuscitate a drowning man in 2001 - just weeks after undergoing open heart surgery.

This year to celebrate the bicentenary Holyhead Lifeboat are proud to be handing the 200 year commemorative baton on to Dafydd Williams aboard the 1907 rowing and sailing lifeboat

Charles Henry Ashley at Cemaes Bay. Dafydd will then hand it over to the Moelfre crew.

On Saturday 20 April the Beaumaris RNLI will be hosting a celebration black tie event at the Canolfan, Beaumaris with music from Seindorf Beaumaris Band and The Suspects and food provided by Gate House Catering. Tickets are £50 each, available from the Canolfan.

There are too many heroic events to relate and too many past and present RNLI volunteers on Anglesey to name here. From people like Mark Smith and Osian Roberts who man the lifeboats, to Phil Hen for his brilliant photos, to Shirley Rogerson who tirelessly fundraises running the RNLI shop in Trearddur Bay, diolch yn fawr to you all for the thousands of lives you have saved over the past 200 years.

I enjoy meeting as many constituents as possible, as well as helping individuals, groups and organisations with problems, projects and ideas. You can contact me at virginia.crosbie.mp@parliament.uk or call me on 01407 644645. Diolch yn fawr.

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