



# Janet Finch-Saunders AM/AC

Assembly Member for Aberconwy  
Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Local Government

Aelod Cynulliad dros Aberconwy  
Ysgrifennydd yr Wrthblaid ar gyfer Llywodraeth Leol

Carwyn Jones AM, First Minister,  
Welsh Government,  
*By Email*

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Ref: MJ/JF0227

National Assembly for Wales,  
Cardiff Bay,  
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**Private and Confidential**

**Re: Business Survey – Aberconwy**

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Dear First Minister, Carwyn,

I am writing with regards to a survey I sent small shops and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) across Aberconwy during the financial year of 2017/18. The aim of this was to provide entrepreneurs with an additional platform through which they could communicate their opinions to me, so that I could establish how you and the Welsh Government can help their businesses thrive.

Having analysed the survey results, I am able to provide you with the following data:

**Rates:**

- 57% saw their rateable value increase in 2017/18; 36% did not have an increase; 7% did not answer.
- 34% of business made an unsuccessful appeal to the Valuation Office Agency; 4% made a successful appeal; 62% did not answer.
- 48% are in receipt of Small Business Rates Relief .
- 2% are in receipt of High Street Rate Relief.
- None are in receipt of Transitional Relief.
- 2% are in receipt of Discretionary Rate Relief.

**Grants:**

- 30% have applied for a Welsh Government grant; 66% have not; 4% did not answer.
- Of the businesses which applied for a Welsh Government grant 23% were successful.





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- 23% have applied for a Local Government grant; 70% have not; 7% did not answer.
- Of the businesses which applied for a Local Government grant 15% were successful.

### Business Wales:

- 52% have received no support from Business Wales; 23% have received support; 25% did not answer.

### Bank Closures:

- 36% have been negatively affected by bank closures; 57% have not; 7% did not answer.

### Broadband:

- 27% have been able to upgraded to superfast; 57% have been unable to; 16% did not answer.
- 61% have a reliable internet connection; 21% do not; 18% did not answer.

### Skills:

- 62% have noticed that there is a shortage of local people with relevant skills for their business when looking to take on staff; 21% have not noticed; 17% did not answer.
- 16% have had difficulties taking on an apprentice; 18% have not; question was not applicable to 43%; 23% did not answer.
- 41% were aware of the Apprentice Small Business Employer Incentive Programme; 50% not aware; 9% did not answer.

As I am sure you are fully aware, SMEs make up almost 100% of private sector business in Wales. Therefore, I would be delighted if you could carefully consider the above data not only with regards to the constituency I am honoured to represent, but as providing an invaluable insight into many of the problems being faced by business across North Wales.





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Having considered the results, it is clear to me that entrepreneurs in Aberconwy are succeeding to manage their business with what seems to be very little support from the Welsh Government. This is in the face of increasing pressures, such as the 57% who are having to deal with the rateable value increase of 2017/18; the 62% who have noticed that there is a shortage of local people with relevant skills for their business when looking to take on staff; the 57% who have been unable to upgrade to superfast; the 77% who made an unsuccessful application for a Welsh Government grant; and the 52% who have received no support from Business Wales.

Given the above, I would be very grateful if you could explain what measures the Welsh Government is taking to ensure that pupils are graduating with skills relevant for work, that businesses can upgrade to superfast, and that Welsh Government grants are more accessible.

Additionally, I have been quite shocked by the fact that Business Wales, a body set up with the aim of supporting entrepreneurs, has helped so few – 23%. Clearly, this is unacceptable. Therefore, it would be appreciated if you could kindly review the work carried out by Business Wales with the intention that it be reformed so that it has a far more positive impact on business in Aberconwy and across Wales. For example, I would like to see its team be far more accessible and help local businesses with applications for Welsh Government grants, obtaining superfast, taking on apprentices, preparing appeals against the increases in rateable values, and finding individuals with the right skill for their workplace.

I very much look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

**Janet Finch-Saunders AM/AC**

