



Report to the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee

1 December 2021

TITLE:	Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership – Overview and Progress Update
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1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. To provide Members of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Sub Committee with an overview and update on progress of the Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership.

2. Decision(s) Sought

- 2.1. To note progress to date.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership (RSP) Board has been established by Ceredigion County Council (CCC) and Powys County Council (PCC) (“the Local Authorities”) to provide a focus for skills in Mid Wales, and to drive economic growth by ensuring investment in the right skills.
- 3.2. The Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership is one of four regional skills partnerships in Wales and covers the Local Authority areas of Powys and Ceredigion.
- 3.3. ***Our vision - as set out in the Mid Wales Growth Deal Inter-Authority Agreement (“the IAA”). Our vision is to align the public and private sectors in order to address the supply and demand issues for an effective agile workforce, with the appropriate skill level to attract inward investment to Mid Wales and improve communication networks between sectors to understand and identify learning and career pathways into long term, appropriate employment for the citizens of Mid Wales.***
- 3.4. The RSP is a primarily business led partnership which works with business leaders and stakeholders across the region to understand the skills provision and labour market needs, in order to drive investment that meets the requirements of both employers and workforce.
- 3.5. The RSP bridges the gap between education and regeneration in the hope of creating a strong and vibrant economy underpinned by innovation, growth, and a capable workforce. Working with partners to explore opportunities to ‘re-skill’, career change,

'up skill' people in their existing employment, build an understanding of skills for the future and to identify skills gaps with employers and provide training opportunities such as work based learning / apprenticeships / degrees and other qualifications such as BTEC – GCSE/A level etc.

- 3.6. The work of the RSP enables an inclusive regional response to Welsh Government policy and initiatives. We align activity with the skills requirements of the Growing Mid Wales Partnership and co-operate strategically on behalf of stakeholders across Mid Wales including both Local Authorities.
- 3.7. The RSP sits under the wider Growing Mid Wales Partnership which is responsible for the Mid Wales Growth Deal. This is a capital programme of funding which plays a key role in catalysing economic recovery and growth in the Mid Wales economy, with the aim of supporting job creation and increasing productivity and wider societal and environmental ambitions.
- 3.8. The RSP Board has been focused on the key areas of work required, in order to provide a clear programme of work to pursue, including the key areas of structure, needs identification, partnership building and future planning.
- 3.9. Welsh Government have notified the region of the targets that need to be achieved during the current year, 2021/22 detailed in Schedule 2 of the Grant Award Letter. The next evidence report, and claim will be submitted in November 2021 in order to draw down funding from Welsh Local Government Association.
- 3.10. Key targets contained in Schedule 2 as follows:

Task	Specific Activities April 2021 – March 2022	Timeline
Gather, produce, and disseminate LMI to support ongoing Welsh Government priorities. Further guidance to be provided.	Covid-19/Brexit Labour Market Intelligence reports.	Three in year reports - dates to be advised.
Adopt the function of the Regional Employment and Response Groups (RERGs) Further guidance to be provided.	RSPs should continue to work closely with their respective Chief Regional Officers and regional stakeholders to support Regional Economic Frameworks and also be aware of cross-border issues. RSPs to provide full secretariat including arranging meetings, taking minutes and	From May 2021

<p>Provide secretariat to Wales Employment and Skills Board (WESB).</p>	<p>hosting members on a rotation meeting basis. Welsh Government will lead on policy content and providing support to Ministers.</p>	<p>From September 2021</p>
<p>Support the alignment of supply and demand across the skills system.</p> <p>Further guidance to be provided.</p>	<p>RSPs to provide baseline data for FE planning, using employer led intelligence and LMI data. Identify and provide timely commentary on regional skills priorities across the sectors. Reference should be made to Welsh Government priorities and Post-16 Planning and Funding Guidance.</p> <p>RSPs to support the development of a revised, strategic approach to post-16 Planning and Funding in light of Covid-19.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
	<p>Identify priorities for apprenticeships based upon employer intelligence.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
	<p>Support Welsh Government Apprenticeships Skills Policy to address the needs of Welsh businesses and the wider economy.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
	<p>Maintain positive working relationships with universities to agree regional priorities for higher education.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

	Work in partnership with schools to inform curriculum development.	Ongoing
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	Inform priorities for PLAs.	Ongoing
	Work with learners/careers advisors to strengthen careers advice across regions.	Ongoing
	Provide an evidence base to inform development and implementation of employability programmes.	Ongoing
	Continue to work with local authorities and schools to update and inform on regional/ local priorities.	Ongoing
Support Welsh Government key strategies and policy areas as agreed (this may change or be updated following the elections in May 2021). Inform the development of skills policy direction post-election.	Welsh Language	Ongoing
	Green Economy	From May 2021
	Digitalisation	
	Health and Social Care	
Other key sectors that may be recognised as priority post-election.		
Facilitate connections in national and regional skills systems.	Provide a regional perspective to inform national and UK sector skills strategies.	Ongoing
	Identify cross-border skills priorities and report back to Welsh Government.	

	Co-ordinate stakeholder/provider support for skills priorities for Advanced Technology Research Centre.	
Continuously develop capacity and capability as a national RSP network.	Review and update membership to ensure regional priority sectors are represented.	Ongoing
	Update/refresh Terms of Reference and Governance arrangements.	
	Strengthen research/data analysis capacity.	
	Enhance on-line presence.	
	Increase robustness of skills observatories.	
	Strengthen collaborative working and sharing best practice between RSPs.	
Support regional economic reconstruction and future developments (including cross-border where required).	Support regional economic reconstruction and future developments (including cross-border where required).	Ongoing
	Identify priorities to support regional investment that supports jobs and growth in the regions.	
Support for meetings and Consultations. <i>Further Guidance to be provided.</i>	RSP Chairs to chair WESB in rotation and produce update report for Council for Economic Development (CED). RSP Managers to attend as observers.	As required

	RSP employer representative to attend WAAB.	
	RSP Chair to represent WESB at CED.	
	Engage RSP members and stakeholders to engage in WG consultations.	
Update Report (in compliance with Clause 10 of the Grant Award Letter)	Submit evidence reports on progress of activities identified in Schedule 2.	July 2021 November 2021 March 2022

4. Progress to date

- 4.1. This section provides an update on progress achieved to date.
- 4.2. The RSP Board's inaugural meeting was held on 12th May 2021. Adrian Watson, Head of School, Centre for Alternative Technology, was appointed as the Interim RSP Board Chair. On 21st September 2021 the GMW Board approved the appointment of the current interim Chair as the substantive Chair until the annual RSP Board meeting in May 2022 for stability and for the RSP Board to appoint a Deputy Chair for the same period.
- 4.3. Although already involved in development work prior to her appointment, Aggie Caesar-Homden commenced in role as the MWRSP Manager on 8th June 2021.
- 4.4. **Recruitment.**
- 4.5. Following a successful recruitment campaign, the RSP Employer Engagement Officer had been appointed and was due to commence in post on 4th October 2021. Unfortunately, at the last minute, the candidate withdrew from the role.
- 4.6. The role had been readvertised as a secondment opportunity across both Powys and Ceredigion Local Authorities as a temporary position until 30th April 2022 in line with current Regional Skills Partnership funding from Welsh Government.
- 4.7. Following a successful recruitment campaign, the RSP Employer Engagement Officer has been appointed and will commence in post on 6th December 2021.
- 4.8. Recruitment of an RSP Data Development Officer has been unsuccessful. In the interim, the provision of data from Data Cymru will provide additional support in the form of analysis using labour market intelligence to identify economic trends and understand skills gaps and shortages across the region, desk-based research and discussions into current developments, infrastructure projects, and policies, comparisons of the position of the regional economy and its skills requirements with educational provision to support curriculum planning recommendations and support the RSP in developing the Covid-19 reports to submit to WG.

- 4.9. ***Establish the foundations of a Regional Skills Observatory to ensure provision of robust LMI, aligned to economic and employer intelligence.***
- 4.10. The RSP Partnership Manager is working with Data Cymru to set up the Mid Wales Skills Observatory and to provide data analysis support. Data Cymru will be providing the RSP team with EMSI Analyst Toolkit licences to supplement national and local Labour Market Intelligence.
- 4.11. A project timeline is being agreed for the establishment of an RSP Website. This will bring together information on the RSPs work and priorities, RSP Board information, governance, and policy documents in a modern content management system. It is anticipated that this will be completed by the end of the year.
- 4.12. In addition to the above, Data Cymru are working with the four RSP Managers to develop a Green Skills Report which will be published in January 2022. The findings of this report will be shared with WG and be reflected in the WG Net Zero Skills Plan. It is understood that this WG report will be published in early spring 2022.
- 4.13. ***Covid – 19 Reporting.***
- 4.14. Although the RSP continues to make good progress, the Employer Engagement officer candidates' withdrawal at very short notice has put further pressures on the existing team. In discussion with the GMW team, some additional support has been provided to the RSP Manager to help with the RSP Board meetings and the Covid 19 impact report submission to Welsh Government originally due at the end of October. Welsh Government agreed to an extension and the report was duly submitted.
- 4.15. An employer survey was sent to Mid Wales businesses through RSP Board members and various networks across the region. The findings from this survey were included in the Covid-19 report submission to WG. This report was reflective of the end to the Furlough scheme and the impact on the labour market. It will also help to identify priorities for apprenticeships based upon employer intelligence.
- 4.16. ***Identify priorities for apprenticeships based upon employer intelligence.*** Since starting in role, the MWRSP Partnership Manager and Chair have been holding 1:1 meetings with training providers and business members of the RSP Board to discuss data on skills needs in the region and identify opportunities voiced by business members. In addition, the RSP Manager has been holding introductory meetings with RSP Board members.
- 4.17. As part of the anecdotal evidence used in the Covid 19 impact submission to WG, an employer survey is sent to Mid Wales business through RSP Board members and business networks.
- 4.18. To support the alignment of supply and demand across the skills system, and support regional economic reconstruction, and future developments, the RSP Manager attends the Growing Mid Wales Management Group meetings. There is a joined-up pan region approach to the Growth Deal programme with the RSP feeding in from a skills perspective.

- 4.19. ***Support Welsh Government Strategies and policy areas as agreed. Inform the development of skills policy direction post-election.***
- 4.20. The Mid Wales RSP continues to support and promote WG key strategies and policy areas. The RSP continues to provide a regional perspective to inform national and UK sector skills strategies and to provide baseline data for FE planning, using employer led intelligence and LMI data.
- 4.21. The RSP Chairs attended a meeting with Vaughan Gething, Minister for Economy on 3rd November.
- 4.22. The RSP Chair and RSP Partnership Manager attended a meeting with Emma Edworthy, Deputy Director, Employability and Skills Division, Welsh Government on Thursday 18th November.
- 4.23. The RSP Manager sits on the newly formed Hybrid Green Skills Council, led by Green Industries Wales, and chaired by Carwyn Jones, former First Minister of Wales. The main reason for the formation of this group is to create an advisory board to provide expertise and insight, impartial and outside of current delivery partners interests with a view to add value and not deliver. As well as being a conduit to harness the excellent work ongoing across the green industry arena, it will be a critical friend, consultative, advisory, and directional body, drawing on the wide skills and knowledge of the forum members. The aim is to provide wide counsel on green skills issues and offer informed opinion on their impact.
- 4.24. The RSP Manager also sits on the newly formed Participating in Fair Work for Health, well-being and Equity Expert Panel being led by Public Health Wales. The purpose of this expert panel is to advise on recommendations for local and regional agencies and partnerships in order to improve participation in good, fair work in a way that supports health, well-being, and equity, and to advise on communication of these recommendations. There will be a particular focus on the impact on young people and children, in view of the Future Generations approach and the potential for long term scarring among young people. As an advisory panel, it is anticipated that material will be developed to influence local wellbeing plans and regional development plans and their implementation; although, the approach will be informed by the views of the panel.
- 4.25. The RSP Manager continues to work closely with our respective Chief Regional Officers and regional stakeholders to support Regional Economic Frameworks, WG priorities and continue to build awareness of cross-border issues.
- 4.26. The four RSP Managers are awaiting further guidance from WG on the requirements for the new Skills Plan and Action Plan which will identify priorities for regional investment that supports jobs and growth in the Mid Wales region.
- 4.27. Joint meetings continue with RSP Managers and Welsh Government to look at PLA guidance and feedback. The RSP Manager is awaiting a comprehensive report from WG detailing current provision and pipeline courses on offer across the region.
- 4.28. The RSP Manager is working closely with the other RSP Managers to continuously develop capacity and capability as a national RSP network. An example of this is the

Green Skills Report – an ongoing piece of work which will provide data and intelligence to the RSPs.

4.29. The RSP Manager has developed relationships with key partners such as Careers Wales, Working Wales, DWP, and Serco (Restart). On 19th October, Careers Wales and DWP held a joint virtual event 'Your Career, Your Future' which the RSP were consulted on. The RSP Chair provided an overview of the work of the RSP, Our Sectoral Strengths, and Growing Mid Wales Ambition. At this stage, feedback and insights have not yet been provided.

5. RSP Board Membership Review

5.1. At its meeting on 21st September, the GMW Board provided delegated authority to the RSP Chair, in conjunction with the RSP Manager, to review current RSP Board membership and establish a number of cluster groups.

5.2. **Our mission.** The RLSP Board acts as a stakeholder group engaging and consulting with specific sectors, industries, and regions:

- To identify and respond to the needs of employers and learners across Mid Wales;
- To engage with employers, sectors, and stakeholders to identify current and future skills needs across the region and plan accordingly;
- To align activity to future demand and stimulate innovation through learning and employment;
- To enable an inclusive regional response to Welsh Government policy and initiatives;
- To align activity with the skills requirements of the Growing Mid Wales Partnership.

5.3. **Our objectives.**

- To work with key stakeholders to identify skill requirements from the private sector in Mid Wales;
- Establish methodologies to identify future employment opportunities across all sectors;
- Establish a curriculum strategy group to align learning pathways and progression routes for all learners from KS4 / 5 into work-based learning training programmes / Further Education / Higher Education or a regional apprenticeship scheme or occupational schemes. 3/ 15; Introduce Higher Education degree and masters courses aligned to the future skills agenda for employment opportunities in Mid Wales;
- Establish a regional apprenticeship scheme (including shared apprenticeships) that bridges and aligns public and private sectors which recognizes the transferability of skills;
- Produce innovative career guidance for all learners in Mid Wales to link learning and career pathways;

- Develop the concept of ‘Centres of Excellence’ in Mid Wales;
- Work with a range of partners to ensure opportunities for career-long support for upskilling the current workforce, including those in short term employment;
- All of the actions will be underpinned by a strong bilingual focus contributing, via the unique bilingual education system and workforce across Mid Wales, to the vision of a million Welsh speakers by 2050.

5.4. The IAA holds the Interim ToR for the RSP but working towards a permanent board for the RLSP, new membership needs to be established.

5.5. The interim membership of the RSP board agreed in the IAA of was to be determined by nomination from each of the following stakeholder groups, with each invited to submit a representative for one seat.

5.6. The ToR set out a proposed membership table for the RLSP. The Local Authorities agreed that the table below would replace the originally proposed table:

Membership of the RLSP	
2 x Higher Education Representatives	One representative from each of the Universities (Aberystwyth and UWTSD)
2 x Further Education Representatives	One representative from each of the colleges (NPTC and Coleg Sir Gâr)
2 x Education & Skills Representatives	One officer from each Local Authority
2 x Strategic Workforce Planning leads	One officer from each Local Authority
2 x Regeneration Representatives	One officer from each Local Authority
2 x Health Representatives	One representative from each of the Health Boards (Powys Teaching Health Board and Hywel Dda Health Board)
Training providers	National Training Federation for Wales + WBL providers from each LA
Industry / Employers The Strategic Growth Priorities for Growing Mid Wales are Agriculture, Food & Drink Transport Supporting Enterprise Skills & Employment Energy Strengthened Tourism Offer Applied Research & Innovation Digital These areas should all be covered by the representation that is proposed for the RLSP.	A representative each from the sectors derived from those identified in AECOM Report: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tourism – to include hospitality and catering 2. Manufacturing 3. Agriculture and the land-based economy 4. Public Services – which might include local and national government, emergency services & defence 5. Foundation sectors * 6. Digital Services (this group is in addition to the AECOM-defined groups) *This “sector” is particularly significant in its relative scale in Mid Wales and includes infrastructure, utilities, food processing, retailing and distribution, and health, education, and welfare. This would merit further breakdown, with particular merit in prioritizing considering representation from health and social care (education is represented in other segments)
Economic Strategy Group Mid Wales	Appointed

Growing Mid Wales Partnership	Representative to be nominated
Careers Wales	Representative to be nominated
Job Centre Plus	Representative to be nominated
RLP Manager	Appointed
Other	Other industry, employer groups, higher education institutions or third sector partners to be invited as required. These could include local voluntary associations and education or training partners from outside the two authorities who might wish to work within the two authorities, or who can offer routes into education or training for the people of the Mid Wales region.

- 5.7. There are known gaps with regard to employer/sector membership, for example, Agriculture, Food and Drink.
- 5.8. The RSP Chair and RSP Partnership Manager have been approached by a number of organisations requesting to join the Mid Wales RSP Board or a cluster group.
- 5.9. The RSP Manager has reviewed membership of the three other RSPs and their cluster groups. Requests received to date are consistent with the other RSPs.
- 5.10. A discussion was undertaken at the RSP Board meeting on Wednesday 20th October to understand potential sector gaps, ensure regional priority sectors are represented and seek member's views on the establishment of cluster groups to help identify and provide timely commentary on regional skills priorities across the sectors.
- 5.11. This piece of work is ongoing, and it is anticipated that a draft report will be presented to the GMW Board in December for approval. As part of this activity, a review will be undertaken to update/refresh the Terms of Reference and Governance arrangements accordingly

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