

# Mid Wales Regional Investment Plan

## UK Shared Prosperity Fund 2022-25



*Successful implementation of this plan will enable Mid Wales to accelerate our economic ambitions and add even further value to ongoing investments at both a regional and local level.*

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# FOREWORD

Ceredigion and Powys Councils have long advocated the opportunities and growth potential of Mid Wales alongside highlighting some of the inequalities facing our communities. We have our barriers and our challenges, and in uncertain economic headwinds – the pressures on our businesses and our communities are significant. We are, however, fully committed to working alongside and with our communities and partner organisations to respond to the challenges of today, alongside developing lasting solutions for the future.

Our ambition is clear. We would like to see Ceredigion and Powys' economies flourish and prosper at every level. From our towns and communities to our basic services, our young people and our community of businesses across the region. A secure place to live, good income and an outstanding environment are tantamount to ensuring that our area is a great place to live, work and enjoy.

This won't be an easy task. However, we have long-established partnership arrangements and extremely capable delivery partners. From our town and community partners, voluntary and social enterprises, and a diverse and resilient private sector – we have the ability to work at all levels to improve social, economic and environmental outcomes in Mid Wales.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will be delivered and administered in both counties, but within the regional partnership arrangements that we have in place with Growing Mid Wales. Strong partnerships will ensure local needs and priorities are met from the funding. Regionally, we will work with our existing partnership structures to ensure we identify and elevate our strategic ambitions – to collaborate in delivering greater lasting impact for the future.

The UKSPF will work alongside existing investments and partnerships, such as the Mid Wales Growth Deal and the Regional Skills Partnership. It will also work alongside the European Funded programmes, as they near their end in 2023, and the suite of existing Council and Welsh Government funding that support our people and communities.

The Regional Investment Plan, therefore, has been set out to provide support in those areas to complement and deliver change where existing funding cannot. The priorities and nature of the fund mean that there are huge opportunities to drive economic growth, but with a strong social and environmental conscience. The plan has been heavily informed by our assessments of local well-being and existing plans and strategies at a local level. These set out the foundations of this plan – of which we now will want to realise with you all to further enhance our region.



**Councillor Bryan Davies,**  
**Leader of Ceredigion County Council**



**Councillor James Gibson-Watt,**  
**Leader of Powys County Council**

# INTRODUCTION

The [UK Shared Prosperity Fund](#) (UKSPF) is a central pillar of the UK Government's Levelling Up agenda and a significant component of its support for places across the UK.

It provides £2.6 billion of new funding for local investment by March 2025, with all areas of the UK receiving an allocation from the Fund via a funding formula rather than a competition.

The primary goal of the UKSPF is to build pride in place and increase life chances across the UK.

The UKSPF will support the UK Government's wider commitment to level up all parts of the UK by delivering on each of the levelling up objectives:

- Boost productivity, pay, jobs and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in those places where they are lagging
- Spread opportunities and improve public services, especially in those places where they are weakest
- Restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost
- Empower local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agency
- Through the Multiply Programme, increase levels of functional numeracy in the adult population (Multiply is an adult numeracy programme announced by the UK Government as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.)

This document sets out the priorities for investing the £42.4m UKSPF allocation in Mid Wales over the next three years (April 2022 to March 2025).

It has been informed by our local economic strategies and Wellbeing assessments, regional documents and studies, lessons learnt from previous funding rounds and considerable stakeholder engagement.

As set out in the SPF guidance, Ceredigion and Powys will deliver their SPF allocations by investing across the investment priority areas listed below;

(a) Communities and Place

(b) Supporting Local Business

(c) People and Skills

(d) Multiply



The rest of this document details the economic and social context for these investment priorities, setting out our challenges and opportunities that in turn, underpin the selected interventions.

The document will also set out indicative expected expenditure for each of the selected interventions, as well as the outcomes and outputs we expect to see delivered in return for the investment.

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## Key Points

- The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is part of a suite of funding from the UK Government as part of its Levelling Up Policy.
- Whilst it does succeed European Funding, it is not a strict replacement for any particular fund.
- The UK Shared Prosperity Fund has been designed to build pride in place and empower local communities. It has a very high proportion of revenue expenditure, with a small amount of capital funding.



# OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES ACROSS MID WALES

## Introduction to Mid Wales

The Mid Wales economy is often characterised as a large and predominantly rural region, comprising 39% of the land mass of Wales but only around 7% of the population. It is known for its natural beauty, strong cultural identities and heritage.

It is less well-known as a land of untapped economic opportunity - where business survival rates outclass the Welsh average; where our natural and academic assets offer an obvious choice for cutting-edge research providing strong opportunities to create new industrial clusters; where there is a strong yet diverse labour market where our educational outcomes are consistently some of the best in Wales' – with strategic commuter links within and outside the region to other parts of Wales and cross-border into England.

The geography of the Mid Wales economy is a critical component in driving and supporting intra-regional growth across Wales and the UK, where the sum total of its economic impact is larger than the sum of its individual parts. The region borders north and south Wales as well as the English counties of Shropshire and Herefordshire. The impact of other regions on the Mid Wales economy is critical and plans need to reflect this interdependence.

The region's economy has its challenges in addressing the structural weaknesses that are currently hindering the potential of our residents and businesses to flourish. Poor connectivity, low GVA per head, limited skills infrastructure, grid constraints and lack of supporting business infrastructure all play their part in limiting the region's potential to take advantage of our opportunities.

At a regional level, a strong strategic context has been developed in conjunction with key partners to help identify place-based opportunities that will benefit communities and residents. In addition to 'A Vision for Growing Mid Wales Strategic Economic Plan' – which sets the direction for regional interventions, including the Mid Wales Growth Deal - regional partners have worked closely with Welsh Government in terms of developing the Mid Wales Regional Economic Framework and the Framework for Regional Investment in order to ensure alignment and clarity of vision. Mid Wales also has its own Regional Skills Partnership that is growing from strength to strength.

# (a) COMMUNITIES AND PLACE

The Mid Wales region comprises the Local Authority areas of Ceredigion and Powys.

It also contains the majority of the Brecon Beacons National Park and is home to ~ 205,000 people.

It is Wales' most rural region and includes extensive upland areas, the Cambrian mountains, Black Mountains, Brecon Beacons and an attractive coastline.

The population is spread across the regions' market towns, villages and rural areas.



- Mid Wales has a wealth of outstanding natural assets and resources from harbours and waterways to mountains and designated landscapes, all of which contribute to an outstanding tourism offer. It is also home to a patchwork of vibrant market towns, and resilient rural communities. Mid Wales has a strong cultural heritage and a high proportion of Welsh speakers.
- 40.1% of the population in Mid Wales can speak Welsh – an increase of 6% since 2009.
- Access to cultural assets and participation in culture, heritage and sports is linked to an increased sense of place and togetherness. Participation in arts activities and events is relatively high in Powys according to the 2019/20 National Survey for Wales (71%) - in contrast, Ceredigion's participation rate (66%) was significantly lower than the Welsh average of 70%.





# KEY CHALLENGES

## Poverty and cost of living crisis

The Mid Wales region has a comparatively low level of deprivation when measured with the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD), with Powys being the second least deprived Local Authority area in Wales.

However, statistical measures do not tend to capture the true nature of rural disadvantage. Poverty in Mid Wales is variable and often hidden due to the rurality and demographics of the region – therefore not resulting in demonstrable concentrations of poverty in datasets (except pockets identified in some of our larger towns). This often masks issues of rural deprivation in terms of access to services, isolation and fuel poverty across the region.

**Mid Wales faces significant challenges in terms of fuel poverty with 17% and 14% of households in Ceredigion and Powys respectively living in fuel poverty.**

**Significant areas of Mid Wales are off the gas grid with 72% of properties in Ceredigion and 52% in Powys having no connection to the gas grid.**



**In a wider context, average earnings for Mid Wales residents are 5.5% below the Wales average in Powys and 12.2% below the Wales average in Ceredigion, exacerbating the impact of fuel poverty.**

These issues have been further exacerbated by the current cost of living crisis. Inflation in the UK is rising, and increasing fuel, food and transport costs are worrying for many across the country.

Mid Wales is no exception, the cost of living in such a rural area has always been more expensive. Most households run at least one car, and fuel bills are higher due to limited public transport, and there is often older, inefficient housing and a reliance on fossil fuels to heat homes.

Recently, there have been energy hikes with more planned for autumn/winter 2022, increasing living costs coupled with static wages will put pressure on many families across the country.

# KEY CHALLENGES

## Climate and biodiversity crisis

Climate change remains the most critical challenge of our time and for future generations.

The Wellbeing Assessments of the respective counties show the value that local people place on their local environment and the crucial role it plays in their well-being, but coordinated action needs to be taken now to protect the environment and mitigate the impacts on both the environment and the biodiversity around us.

In order to meet Welsh Government targets, and to be on track for net zero by 2050, Mid Wales needs to reduce emissions from its energy system by 55% by 2035.

Energy modelling contained within the Mid Wales Energy Plan sets out high-level targets to achieve this reduction, split by sector as follows:

- 66% reduction in domestic emissions;
- 48% reduction in commercial and industrial emissions;
- 54% reduction in road transport emissions.



The Mid Wales Energy Strategy outlines several strategic priorities for the region including working proactively to ensure that electricity and gas grids in the region are suitable for a 100% decarbonised future and ambitions to boost the use of renewable energy through new generation and storage.

Mid Wales has several key challenges to overcome to decarbonise our energy system including:

- Large numbers of off-grid properties heated by fossil fuels (oil and gas)
- Poor fabric energy inefficient domestic and commercial building stock leading to high energy bills
- High levels of fuel poverty
- High reliance on private car use due to long rural travel distances
- An infrequent and unattractive public transport offer.

Ensuring our electricity and gas grids are suitable for a 100% decarbonised future will require increased renewable energy generation and storage alongside strengthening the Mid Wales grid capacity.

Mid Wales is uniquely placed to play a key role in the net zero transition, supporting the overarching strengthening of the UK energy security, increased community ownership, and stimulating regional green skills and supply chain development.

# KEY CHALLENGES

Wales is one of the worst affected nations in the world for biodiversity loss.

Research by the State of Nature Partnership highlights that one in six species in Wales is threatened with extinction.

Mid Wales's rich variety of species and habitats are under threat due to the unsustainable management of agricultural land and woodland, climate change, invasive species and pollution of freshwater habitats.

The Well-being Survey highlighted this as a particular concern amongst Ceredigion residents.

As part of the Protected Sites Baseline Assessment undertaken in 2020, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) currently has sufficient evidence to determine the condition of around 51% of the features on these sites in Mid Wales (Powys and Ceredigion combined).

Of those features, an estimated 41% are 'favourable', around 57% are 'unfavourable' and almost 2% are destroyed. This information suggests that our habitats and species are under increasing pressure across the region.

Nutrient Neutrality and the NRW assessment of riverine Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) in Wales particularly in relation to phosphates further compound the issues of habitat and species loss.



In Mid Wales, the rivers Wye and Teifi have both failed their targets, leading to the establishment of Nutrient Management Boards and the development of Nutrient Management Plans.

This work requires the development of a significant evidence base in order to address and bring into favourable status the health of the SAC rivers.

In addition, the provision of outdoor play areas and general access to nature and green spaces emerged as a key priority post-pandemic. Further work is required to encourage and enable people, without a private outdoor space, or through lack of transport or disability to access public green space in their communities. Reduced Local Authority budgets over successive years have meant reduced investment in leisure and sports facilities – which has resulted in a number of facilities being in disrepair/inaccessible to the community.

Flooding is a potential risk for coastal and inland places in the region. Major rivers including the Teifi, Usk, Wye and Severn flow through the area. They have the potential to break their banks in periods of heavy rainfall and be the source of flooding elsewhere. Coastal locations, including Aberystwyth, have experienced storms causing coastal defences to be overtopped.



# KEY CHALLENGES

## Connectivity

Access to good quality broadband and mobile phone service is essential to 21st-century living.

From staying connected with family and friends to accessing critical services such as online shopping and online medical consultations; broadband and mobile phone service can be an important determinant of well-being.

Historically, levels of digital connectivity in Mid Wales currently lag significantly behind other parts of Wales and the UK. However, it is an improving picture in some parts and the state of digital connectivity varies widely across the region.

Perhaps surprisingly, 20% of premises in Ceredigion receive Full Fibre Broadband (the fastest and most reliable broadband technology), which is higher than the Mid/South West Wales region (8.8%), the Wales average (7.5%) and the average for the UK as a whole (7.1%).

However, at the same time, there is still a considerable number of properties that have an internet connectivity speed of under 10 Mbps.

Powys has the highest rate of those unable to receive 10mbps amongst all local authorities in Wales. The second highest is Ceredigion with 11.5%.

21% of premises in Powys are unable to access 30 Mbps internet connectivity speed – the highest rate amongst all local authorities in Wales. The second highest is again Ceredigion with 19%.



Mobile coverage is another connectivity issue that needs to be tackled in Mid Wales.

It is similar to the situation with internet connectivity, with some parts of the region seeing an improving picture.

However, there are still mobile 'not spots' According to OFCOM (OFCOM, 2020) the counties within the region have the highest levels of no 3G coverage indoors (5.8% of Powys, Ceredigion 6.3%).

It also has the poorest indoor 4G mobile signal coverage (7.3% of Powys properties cannot receive 4G mobile signal indoors, Ceredigion 7.9%).

# KEY CHALLENGES

## Revitalising Town Centres

The market towns which are a characteristic feature of Mid Wales are currently facing several challenges.

High street shopping is under pressure as the culture of online shopping continues to grow.

The changing nature of work – greatly accelerated by the pandemic – means businesses traditionally once found on the high street are moving to different delivery models, leaving vacant premises to be filled.

There is a continued importance of addressing the viability of the commercial property market. There is also a need to focus on the presentation of town centres and the street environment.

As we continue to recover from the pandemic, there is an opportunity to re-develop the town centres, utilise digital technology and reinvigorate the shopping experience, building on the regional and local work already undertaken in terms of Town Centre Place Plans, Regeneration and Marketing Strategies and Green Infrastructure Action plans.

# KEY OPPORTUNITIES

## Green Infrastructure and Active Travel

The Mid Wales Joint Transport Plan identifies various opportunities to increase mode share by active travel modes, to improve the health and well-being of the local community and to continue to improve the road safety record.

Further development of active travel and green infrastructure is required to promote a modal shift and capitalise on the relatively high amount of short-distance employment trips. As a fact, a high proportion of commuter trips within the key settlements of Mid Wales are less than 5km and could potentially be undertaken by such modes. This includes the need to develop in-town cycle networks, particularly within key settlements.

In order to encourage walking and cycling within and between communities, accessible and safe routes need to be provided. Often road widths are limited and do not incorporate footways or sufficient width for a cycle lane or dedicated cycle route. In many small communities, there is a lack of a connected footway network, which discourages walking trips. There are many towns and villages where there is very limited walking or cycling access to shops, services and workplaces.

These opportunities are supported by the Well-being Assessments of the respective counties.



# KEY OPPORTUNITIES

## Improving digital connectivity

Enhanced, good-quality digital connectivity and accelerating its deployment is fundamental to transforming the Mid Wales economy and enabling growth.

Confidence in digital infrastructure will be vital to support future business investment in the region. Digital technologies are transforming communications, services, learning and business opportunities at an ever-increasing pace. New digital technology like 5G plus the Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence and data analytics have the potential to open up new businesses and improve the lives of communities.



Investment in digital infrastructure and supporting the adoption and exploitation of next-generation digital technologies will be critical to improving productivity, capitalising on innovation and becoming more competitive as a region. Improved connectivity will provide businesses with access to markets, information sources, services and opportunities both in the UK and globally. Public interventions will be key to addressing non-commercial areas that are unlikely to receive private sector investment.

Ensuring access to good quality digital connectivity and supporting digital skills will also help bridge the 'digital divide' and give people the freedom to live and work more flexibly while making the region a more attractive place to live. It will also remove constraints on business growth.



# (b)SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS

Mid Wales has a narrow economic base in comparison to other economic regions in Wales.

Key sectors such as agriculture (37% of all businesses) perform less well in terms of productivity.

Employment seasonality also adds vulnerability.

- Mid Wales contains 12,660 VAT-registered businesses.
- The business base has a very high proportion (>95%) of micro-businesses (<10 employees) and the highest levels of self-employment in Wales.
- Over the past ten years, growth in the number of businesses in the region has remained relatively static at 2% and has lagged significantly behind Wales and the UK.
- Survival rates for new businesses after 5 years are however significantly better in Mid Wales than for England & Wales.
- The large geographic area and rural nature of Mid Wales means that business density is also significantly lower than in Wales and the UK.

**However, Mid Wales has particularly important sectoral strengths in high-value manufacturing, tourism, agriculture, food and drink.**



# KEY CHALLENGES

The key challenges facing the local economy are to attract new businesses and grow existing businesses, create more and higher paid job opportunities, provide opportunities for younger people to remain in the region, and increase average earnings in the region in comparison to Wales as a whole.

There is also the need to continue to support businesses recovering from the pandemic.

By tackling these challenges, we will also increase the historically low levels of productivity and GVA. Particularly Powys which has the lowest GVA per hour worked in the UK since 2008 (ONS, 2021).

**Other challenges include the hidden nature of a rural economy - relatively strong employment and low unemployment data masks low pay and underemployment.**

**The high self-employment and home working data combined with low incomes are masking rural poverty which is a real cause for concern amongst local authorities and policy makers.**

The region also has a narrow and vulnerable economic base, which leads to employment and productivity imbalances.

The largest GVA contributors are manufacturing, real estate and wholesale and retail – whilst agriculture employs the most, it contributes comparatively less GVA.

## Support and grow existing businesses

Just 0.8% of businesses across Mid Wales are classed as medium or large (50+ employees).

If we are to realise economic growth and increase productivity, there is a need to focus on supporting these businesses to upscale to fill the 'missing middle' gap and provide quality job opportunities, complementing existing provision delivered/planned by the pan-Wales Business Wales programme.



# KEY CHALLENGES

## Creating an attractive business environment

Ensuring the right supply and location of employment land and premises to meet business needs is a vital component of supporting the competitiveness of the economy.



The employment sites and premises market in Mid Wales differs from adjacent regions. Most of the demand is from businesses already established in the region.

There is a recognised lack of availability and investment in modern and technical employment premises across the region with low levels of speculative development and issues of commercial viability in provision.

Market failure drives an estimated viability gap of ~ 60%, with further detailed work ongoing to establish a case for regional investment.

These infrastructure investments need to be complimented and supported by a supportive business ecosystem.

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## Create better paid job opportunities and increase earnings

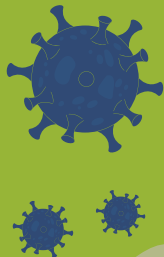
- Underemployment, low earnings and seasonal employment remain key challenges in Mid Wales.
- Average full-time weekly earnings for example were 93% of the UK average in 2016 and 94% of the Wales average in 2019.
- In a wider context, average earnings for Mid Wales residents fall 5.5% below the Wales average in Powys and 12.2% below the Wales average in Ceredigion, exacerbating the impact of issues such as fuel poverty.

It is therefore vital to create quality job opportunities in high-paying sectors in order to increase average earnings.

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# KEY CHALLENGES

## Support recovery from the pandemic



Due to the unprecedented impact of Covid-19 on businesses across Mid Wales, there is a continued need to support businesses to recover from the pandemic.

While all industries have been adversely impacted, the seasonal accommodation and food services that make up a large proportion of the Mid Wales economy were hit hardest by the coronavirus pandemic.

Many businesses have also taken on more debt in order to survive the pandemic, and now need to further adapt their business models and increase productivity in order to avoid becoming 'zombie businesses' incapable of further growth.

Due to the lag in reporting data, and the impact of other factors such as Brexit and the Ukrainian war, it is difficult to both predict and attribute any medium and longer-term effect the pandemic will have on other economic indicators such as employment.

The data paints a mixed picture. A Covid-impact report undertaken by the Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership (RSP) states unemployment levels in Mid Wales have increased by 0.7% since the year ending 31st March 2021.

However, at the same time Claimant levels in Mid Wales have decreased by 1.5% to 3.1% between September 2020 and September 2021.

It will be vital for provisions funded under the SPF to be able to flex to suit local and regional needs.



Mid Wales has particularly important sectoral strengths in high value manufacturing, tourism, agriculture, food and drink.

There are also various structures and mechanisms in place in order for the region to engage with businesses and ensure appropriate business support provision, such as the employer-led Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership and the Growing Mid Wales Partnership.



# KEY OPPORTUNITIES

## Making Mid Wales the place to start a business

Over the past ten years, growth in the number of businesses in the region has remained relatively static at 2% and has lagged significantly behind Wales (15%) and the UK (27%).

Survival rates for new businesses after 5 years are however significantly better in Mid Wales than for England & Wales, suggesting a level of business confidence and resilience that could be capitalised on. An opportunity exists in this regard to provide targeted and local level support to individuals looking to start a business, complementing the national offer.

## Green skills and decarbonisation

Decarbonisation and renewable energy production is an important part of the green economy in the region.

A net zero society, if delivered successfully, offers enormous opportunities to create a vibrant and socially-just economy. However, decarbonising Wales will be a huge challenge.

The regional Applied R&I study identified several distinctive strengths with regards to the low carbon and energy sector in Mid Wales, notably the research capacity and expertise in energy and environment, the presence of key assets and innovative companies and the underpinning regional landscape and natural environment. It also identifies the need to develop relevant skills for innovation in this sector in order to fully exploit these opportunities.

There is currently a reported lack of expertise in the region to implement renewable energy projects and exploit new innovations (e.g., in the construction sector); this is further exacerbated by a national skills deficit in the circular/sustainable economy.

# KEY OPPORTUNITIES

## Developing a sustainable tourism sector

The tourism sector employs over 18,500 people in Mid Wales and has grown significantly over the past ten years. It was worth an estimated £1.41 billion in 2019. There are major opportunities within the regions' natural, cultural and heritage assets to add value to the region's tourism sector.

When compared to other regions of the UK, Mid Wales has a lower occupancy rate in tourism accommodation, being around 6% lower than Scotland and 10% lower than England. In addition, productivity and wages in the Mid Wales tourism sector remain lower than the overall average for the economy in Wales. This results in reduced revenue for the sector in Mid Wales. In order for the industry to capitalise on its potential, it is vital that Mid Wales is able to strengthen the shoulder season occupancy and maximise visitor spend.

Throughout the region, the tourism offer needs investment to generate higher value returns for the economy that is delivered in partnership and aligned with Government and key stakeholders to develop Mid Wales' distinctive offer through addressing seasonality, spend and spread.

Capitalising on opportunities to strengthen our tourism offer will also spur wider economic growth potential.

A stronger focus will be given to showcasing what Mid Wales has to offer, this will, in turn, provide a boost for the food and drink sector and help home-grown businesses to flourish.

## Increasing Applied R&I activity

Mid Wales has several strengths in terms of Applied R&I, including well established strengths in food manufacturing, animal health, Agri-Tech and biosciences.

There are also recognised growth opportunities in terms of sustainable construction, renewable energy and power electronics.

However, the regional Applied R&I study also identified several issues that needed to be addressed in order to fully exploit the opportunities available to the region. These included increased co-ordination and networking; addressing funding, infrastructure and information gaps; increasing innovation skills and capabilities; and general awareness and promotion.



# KEY OPPORTUNITIES

## Encouraging SME growth and expansion

Combining the strong start-up and micro business base in Mid Wales, with the consistent business survival rates, the opportunity emerges to support businesses to transition from their early phase of growth towards becoming sustainable medium-sized businesses.

Increasing these businesses in the coming decades will be one of the main ways in which new and higher-paid employment opportunities can be provided, along with greater career opportunities.

This approach will help develop companies that are rooted in their communities in Mid Wales.



## Welsh Language

The Welsh language is particularly important in Mid Wales, with a number of initiatives and support provided to businesses to help trade and engage with the language.

As across Wales, there is a recognition that more can be done to further improve the support for businesses in this space, to help develop their presence and offer, not only to serve the Welsh-speaking population of Mid and further afield in Wales but also to generate new products and opportunities.



# KEY CHALLENGES

## A declining and ageing population

This indicates reducing population figures and a changing demographic, demonstrating the 'pinched middle' of a relatively high older population and a proportionately low working age population.

The demographic profile of the region presents both challenges and opportunities.

At an overall population of 205,000, Mid Wales is characterised by an ageing population and a net out-migration of young people. Since 2008, the region has seen an overall decline in its population of around 1.2%.

The working age population is less than the Welsh and UK average and is predominantly characterised by higher proportions of 50-64 and 65+ year-olds. There is a relatively small share of working age people due to the higher proportions of 50-64 and 65+ year-olds. Comparatively, Mid Wales has proportionally fewer people below the working age – though the figures are partly skewed due to the student population in key locations in Ceredigion.

Population projections for Mid Wales currently estimate a 16% decline in the working age population and 37% increase in the 65+ age group to 2039. Unless addressed, this predicted trend is likely to reduce the region's workforce over the next 15 years.

## Projected employment decline

Forecasts show the Welsh economy growing by 1.7% during the period 2018-2040 (+ 24,000 jobs) while the Mid Wales economy is forecasted to decline 3.45% (reduction of 3,352 jobs) – whilst the UK looks set to grow by 7.4% over the same period.

## Static and weakening labour market

Gaps in skills provision and infrastructure to adequately meet industry demands are amplified by a lack of focus on the issue in Mid Wales.

Weaknesses in regional skills infrastructure exacerbate the lack of employment and educational opportunities – leading to a reducing equality of opportunity and labour mobility whilst reinforcing out-migration. Powys' commuting outflows of -3,495 especially highlight the need to improve employment opportunities.



# KEY CHALLENGES

## Skills delivery

Mid Wales performs well in educational attainment with levels of achievement at GCSE level exceeding the Welsh average.

Whilst the proportion of young people Not in Employment, Education and Training (NEET) is comparatively low compared to the Welsh average, Mid Wales has particular support requirements for NEETs to ensure a safety net for our young people to get back on track.

Demand has also increased post-pandemic, with more young people disengaging with education, employment or training – increasing in emotional dysregulated behaviours leading to exclusions. While the qualifications profile of Mid Wales performs better than the Welsh average however, we have lower rates of older people upskilling.

Despite these strengths, skills gaps and recruitment difficulties are commonplace amongst Mid Wales employers. The market suffers a skills mismatch (such as, over- or under- qualification, skill gap or skill shortages). Engagement with private sector representatives highlighted that one of the key issues is the absence of skilled workers in certain sectors, such as the Hospitality Sector which is experiencing a significant shortage of skills and labour.

Apprenticeships and further education delivery are challenged by the rural nature of the region. Employer investment in training is currently relatively low, possibly reflecting the high proportion of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).



# KEY OPPORTUNITIES

## Ensuring all young people are given the opportunity to reach their potential

There were 54,000 people below the age of 25 in Mid Wales in 2020, with 22,000 of these young people of working age (16 to 24 yrs) – of these 22,000, 90% are either in employment or full-time education.

There are around 2,200 young people who are NEET. They face specific issues with regards to accessing skills provision and support in a rural context that need to be addressed in order to ensure they become and remain economically active and contribute to the regional economy.

## High levels of educational attainment

47.5% of residents (18–64-year-olds) have a NQF level 4 or above (equivalent to the first year of a Bachelor's degree programme) in Mid Wales, resulting in its regional workforce being the most qualified in Wales. There is a need to create better quality job opportunities in order to retain these people within the region.

## Digital Skills

Ensuring access to good quality digital connectivity and supporting digital skills will help bridge the 'digital divide' and give people the freedom to live and work more flexibly while making the region a more attractive place to live. It will also remove constraints on business growth.

Continued development of digital working skills is critical to helping support businesses and residents to get online.

In addition, as more and more vital public services are being delivered online, people are at risk of being left behind and digitally excluded. The level of digital exclusion in Wales is higher than in the UK, with as many as 10% of the population, or 255,000 people, not using the internet.

Research suggests that people in rural areas are more likely to be digitally excluded due to poor digital infrastructure. Older adults, people with disabilities or long-term health conditions, those with lower educational attainment and those on low-income are all more likely to be digitally excluded.

# KEY OPPORTUNITIES

## Green Skills

Given the wealth of relevant assets in the region, Mid Wales is well placed to capitalise on training and skills development to attract young graduates and fuel innovation in the field of carbon reduction and renewable energy.



## Multi-skilled workforce

As people remain in work longer, there will need to be a number of opportunities for life-long learning to ensure individuals remain employable and skilled.

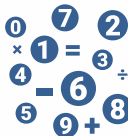
There is also an opportunity to ensure older residents use their skills, knowledge and experience to help others in the community and remain actively engaged in the economy.

As rural areas tend to have smaller workforces due to a lower population density, it is vital to ensure that all cohorts of the economically active population are skilled appropriately, including basic literacy, numeracy and digital skills.

## (d) Multiply

The Multiply programme is currently being scoped and discussed with UK Government with close engagement and input of the Welsh Government.

More information on this programme will be published in due course.



# INVESTMENT PRIORITIES AND TARGETED OUTCOMES

## Strategic Alignment

Our Regional Investment Plan is aligned to and will support the implementation of existing local and regional strategies, including:

- [A Vision for Growing Mid Wales](#) Strategic Economic Plan (including its relevant substrategies such as the Energy Strategy and associated research pieces)
- [Ceredigion Corporate Strategy 2022-27](#)
- [Boosting Ceredigion's Economy: A Strategy for Action 2020-35](#)
- [Ceredigion Public Service Board Assessment of Local Wellbeing 2022](#)
- [Ceredigion's Through Age and Wellbeing Strategy](#).
- [The Health and Care Strategy for Powys: A Vision for 2027 and Beyond](#) (Currently being reviewed)
- [Presentation of Our Vision for Powys - Powys County Council](#)
- [Powys Public Service Board Assessment of Local Wellbeing 2022](#)

For each of the three investment priorities: Communities and Place, Supporting Local Business and People and Skills, a number of interventions outlined in the Government's guidance have been selected based on evidence and extensive consultation.

The prioritised interventions in this plan have been selected in order to have a framework of investment opportunities, that will align to the strategic level objectives of the Mid Wales region, but also to allow for local flexibility and opportunities to be supported.

**The following pages summarise the Investment Priorities, as well as the expected outcomes and outputs for each.**

## Investment Priority - Communities and Place

Investment Priority*	Expected Outputs	Expected Outcomes
W1: Improvements to town centres & high streets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of commercial buildings developed or improved</li> <li>• Amount of commercial buildings developed or improved</li> <li>• Number of rehabilitated premises</li> <li>• Amount of public realm created or improved</li> <li>• Number of low or zero carbon energy infrastructure installed</li> <li>• Square metres of land made wheelchair accessible/step free</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased footfall Increased visitor numbers</li> </ul>
W2: New or existing community & neighbourhood infrastructure projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of low or zero carbon energy infrastructure installed</li> <li>• Number of organisations receiving non-financial support</li> <li>• Number of neighbourhood improvements undertaken</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased number of properties protected from flooding and/or coastal erosion</li> </ul>
W3: Creation & improvement to local green spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amount of rehabilitated land</li> <li>• Square metres of land made wheelchair accessible/step free</li> <li>• Number of neighbourhood improvements undertaken</li> <li>• Amount of green or blue space created or improved</li> <li>• Number of new or improved cycleways or paths</li> <li>• Number of trees planted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased footfall</li> <li>• Increased visitor numbers</li> <li>• Increased users of facilities/amenities</li> <li>• Increased use of cycleways or paths</li> </ul>

\*Investment Priority - these are selected investment priorities put forward in the Mid Wales plan. Not all investment priorities from UK SPF Prospectus have been taken forward.

## Investment Priority - Communities and Place

Investment Priority*	Expected Outputs	Expected Outcomes
<p>W6: Support for local arts, cultural, heritage &amp; creative activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of organisations receiving non-financial support</li> <li>• Number of local events or activities supported</li> <li>• Number of volunteering opportunities supported</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jobs created</li> <li>• Jobs safeguarded</li> <li>• Increased footfall</li> <li>• Increased visitor numbers</li> <li>• Improved engagement numbers</li> <li>• Improved perception of events</li> <li>• Number of community-led arts, cultural, heritage and creative programmes as a result of support</li> </ul>
<p>W7: Active travel enhancements &amp; other small scale green transport projects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of new or improved cycleways or paths</li> <li>• Amount of new or improved cycleways or paths</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased use of cycleways or paths</li> </ul>
<p>W9: Impactful volunteering and/or social action projects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of organisations receiving non-financial support</li> <li>• Number of local events or activities supported</li> <li>• Number of volunteering opportunities supported</li> <li>• Number of projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved engagement numbers</li> <li>• Volunteering numbers as a result of support</li> </ul>

\*Investment Priority - these are selected investment priorities put forward in the Mid Wales plan. Not all investment priorities from UK SPF Prospectus have been taken forward.

## Investment Priority - Communities and Place

Investment Priority	Expected Outputs	Expected Outcomes
<p>W10: Funding for local sports facilities, teams &amp; leagues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of facilities supported/created</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased users of facilities/amenities</li> <li>• Improved perception of events</li> </ul>
<p>W11: Capacity building &amp; infrastructure support local groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of organisations receiving non-financial support</li> <li>• Number of facilities supported/created</li> <li>• Amount of green or blue space created or improved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved engagement numbers</li> <li>• Number of new or improved community facilities as a result of support</li> </ul>
<p>W13: Community measures to reduce the cost of living etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of organisations receiving non-financial support</li> <li>• Number of households receiving support</li> <li>• Number of household supported to take up energy efficiency measures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greenhouse gas reductions</li> <li>• Increased take up of energy efficiency measures</li> </ul>
<p>W14: Relevant feasibility studies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of feasibility studies supported</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased number of projects arising from funded feasibility studies</li> </ul>
<p>W15: Investment &amp; support for digital infrastructure for local facilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of organisations receiving non-financial support</li> <li>• Number of facilities supported/created</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of new or improved community facilities as a result of support</li> <li>• Number of premises with improved digital connectivity</li> </ul>



## Investment Priority - Supporting Local Business

Investment Priority*	Expected Outputs	Expected Outcomes
<p>W16: Open markets &amp; town centre retail &amp; service sector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of local markets supported</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase footfall</li> <li>• Increased visitor numbers</li> <li>• Improved perception of markets</li> <li>• Increased number of businesses supported</li> </ul>
<p>W17: Development &amp; promotion of visitor economy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of local events or activities supported</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased footfall</li> <li>• Increased visitor numbers</li> </ul>
<p>W18: Supporting the Made Smarter Adoption programme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of businesses receiving grants</li> <li>• Number of people attending training sessions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased amount of investment</li> <li>• Number of businesses introducing new products to the firm</li> <li>• Number of organisations engaged in new knowledge transfer activity</li> <li>• Number of businesses adopting new to the firm technology or processes</li> </ul>

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Not all investment priorities from UKSPF Prospectus have been taken forward.

## Investment Priority - Supporting Local Business

Investment Priority*	Expected Outputs	Expected Outcomes
<p>W19: Increasing investment in research &amp; development at the local level</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of potential entrepreneurs provided assistance to be business ready</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of new businesses created</li> <li>Number of businesses introducing new products to the firm</li> <li>Number of organisations engaged in new knowledge transfer activity</li> <li>Number of businesses adopting new to the firm technology or processes</li> </ul>
<p>W21: Development of innovation infrastructure at a local level</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of businesses receiving financial support other than grants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of businesses with improved productivity</li> </ul>
<p>W22: Enterprise infrastructure &amp; employment / innovation site projects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of commercial buildings developed or improved</li> <li>Number of rehabilitated premises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased amount of investment</li> <li>Number of premises with improved connectivity</li> </ul>

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Not all investment priorities from UKSPF Prospectus have been taken forward.

## Investment Priority - Supporting Local Business

Investment Priority*	Expected Outputs	Expected Outcomes
<p>W23: Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of potential entrepreneurs provided assistance to be business ready</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jobs created</li> <li>Jobs safeguarded</li> <li>Number of new businesses created</li> </ul>
<p>W26: Growing the local social economy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of potential entrepreneurs provided assistance to be business ready</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jobs created</li> <li>Jobs safeguarded</li> </ul>
<p>W28: Export grants to grow overseas trading etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of businesses receiving grants</li> <li>Number of businesses engaged in new markets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jobs created</li> <li>Jobs safeguarded</li> </ul>
<p>W29: Supporting decarbonisation whilst growing local economy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of low or zero carbon energy infrastructure installed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jobs created</li> <li>Jobs safeguarded</li> <li>Greenhouse gas reductions</li> </ul>

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Not all investment priorities from UKSPF Prospectus have been taken forward.

## Investment Priority - Supporting Local Business

Investment Priority*	Expected Outputs	Expected Outcomes
W31: Support relevant feasibility studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of feasibility studies supported</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased number of projects arising from funded feasibility studies</li> </ul>
W32: Progression of small business into productive medium sized firms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of business receiving financial support other than grants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of organisations engaged in new knowledge transfer activity</li> </ul>
W33: Investment to protect from natural hazards, flooding and coastal erosion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of businesses receiving grants</li> <li>• Number of businesses engaged in new markets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jobs created</li> <li>• Jobs safeguarded</li> </ul>

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Not all investment priorities from UKSPF Prospectus have been taken forward.

## Investment Priority - People and Skills

Investment Priority*	Expected Outputs	Expected Outcomes
<p>W35: Courses including basic &amp; life skills for people not economically inactive</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of people supported to engage in life skills</li> <li>• Number of people supported onto a course through providing financial support</li> <li>• Number of people supported to gain a qualification or complete a course</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of people in employment, including self employment, following support</li> <li>• Number of people in education/training</li> <li>• Number of people experiencing reduced structural barriers into employment and into skills provision</li> </ul>
<p>W37: Increase levels of digital inclusion, with focus on essential digital skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of people supported to access basic skills</li> <li>• Number of people supported to engage in life skills</li> <li>• Number of people supported to gain a qualification or complete a course</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of people gaining a qualification or completing a course following support</li> </ul>
<p>W39: Local areas to fund local skills needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of people receiving support to gain a vocational licence</li> <li>• Number of people supported to gain a qualification or complete a course</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of people in employment, including self employment, following support</li> <li>• Number of people in education/training</li> <li>• Number of economically active individuals engaged in mainstream skills education and training</li> </ul>

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Not all investment priorities from UKSPF Prospectus have been taken forward.

## Investment Priority - People and Skills

Investment Priority*	Expected Outputs	Expected Outcomes
W40: Green skills courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of people receiving support to gain employment</li> <li>• Number of people supported to gain a qualification or complete a course</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of people in employment, including self employment, following support</li> <li>• Number of people gaining a qualification or completing a course following support</li> </ul>
W41: Retraining & upskilling support for those in high carbon sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of people retraining</li> <li>• Number of people attending training sessions</li> <li>• Number of people supported to gain a qualification or complete a course</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of people gaining a qualification or completing a course following support</li> </ul>
W42: Funding to support local digital skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of people supported to engage in life skills</li> <li>• Number of people supported to gain a qualification or complete a course</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of people gaining a qualification or completing a course following support</li> </ul>

\*Investment Priority - these are selected investment priorities put forward in the Mid Wales plan.  
Not all investment priorities from UKSPF Prospectus have been taken forward.

## Investment Priority - People and Skills

Investment Priority*	Expected Outputs	Expected Outcomes
W43: Support engagement & softer skills development for young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of people supported to access basic skills</li> <li>• Number of people supported to engage in life skills</li> <li>• Number of people supported onto a course through providing financial support</li> <li>• Number of people supported to gain a qualification or complete a course</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased number of people gaining qualifications, licences and skills</li> <li>• Increased number of people engaging in life skills support following interventions</li> </ul>

NOTE: Interventions W34 and W36 have been included in the submitted plan to UK Government, however at this stage there are no financial allocations or outputs attached to them. There needs to be further scoping conversations around potential activity under these interventions to understand possible duplication and additionality.

\*Investment Priority - these are selected investment priorities put forward in the Mid Wales plan.  
 Not all investment priorities from UK SPF Prospectus have been taken forward.

## Investment Priority – Multiply

Investment Priority*	Expected Outputs	Expected Outcomes
<p>W47: Courses aimed at encouraging people to upskill to access jobs/careers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of adult numeracy courses run in a local area through Multiply (numerical value)</li> <li>• Number of people participating in Multiply funded courses (numerical value)</li> <li>• Number of people achieving a qualification (numerical value)</li> <li>• Number of courses developed in collaboration with employers (numerical value)</li> <li>• Number of people referred from partners onto upskill courses (numerical value)</li> <li>• Number of different cohorts participating in numeracy courses (e.g., learners in prison, parents etc.) (numerical value)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of adults achieving maths qualifications up to, and including, Level 2 (numerical value)</li> <li>• Number of adults participating in maths qualifications and courses up to, and including, Level 2 (numerical value)</li> </ul>
<p>W51: Courses designed to help with numeracy for managing money</p>		
<p>W53: Provision developed in partnership with community organisations</p>		

\*Investment Priority - these are selected investment priorities put forward in the Mid Wales plan. Not all investment priorities from UKSPF Prospectus have been taken forward.

NOTE: The Multiply allocation has been under profiled and is highly indicative at this stage. At the time of publishing this document, dialogue is ongoing with UK Government on the scope and scale of the Multiply programme.



# Budget allocation between investment priorities

The funding allocated to the investment priorities are currently highly indicative, and as such should be used as a guide only.

They represent what we feel to be an appropriate distribution of funds to respond to the challenges and opportunities in each area.

Mid Wales has a significant productivity challenge, but it is also not immune to global factors pertaining to the economy and the environment.

Climate change and the cost-of-living crisis will be a dominant force in shaping our economy and society; the UKSPF should have a strong role to play in both mitigating and proactive long-term change.

The funding allocations will likely change as we enter year 1 delivery in the autumn of 2022, and as the programme moves to future years. The allocations will be re-profiled regularly with UK Government as we monitor the fund's performance.

# Budget allocation between investment priorities

UKSPF Investment Priority	2022-23			2023-24			2024-25			Total 2022-25		
	Ceredigion	Powys	Total	Ceredigion	Powys	Total	Ceredigion	Powys	Total	Capital	Revenue	Total
Communities and Place	£0.61m	£1.1m	£1.7m	£1.2m	£2.2m	£3.4m	£3.15m	£5.78m	£8.9m	£7.2m	£6.8m	£14m
Supporting Local Business	£0.61m	£1.1m	£1.7m	£0.61m	£2.2m	£3.4m	£3.15m	£5.78m	£8.9m	£1.7m	£12.3m	£14m
People and Skills	£0.3m	£0.55m	£0.85m	£0.6m	£1.1m	£1.7m	£1.57m	£2.89m	£4.46m	£0m	£7m	£7m
UKSPF Total (excl. Multiply)	£1.5m	£2.76m	£4.26m	£3m	£5.51m	£8.5m	£7.87m	£14.44m	£22.31m	£8.9m	£26.1m	£35m
Multiply	£0.78m	£1.43m	£2.21m	£0.9m	£1.65m	£2.55m	£0.9m	£1.65m	£2.55m	£0m	£7.32m	£7.32m
UKSPF and Multiply TOTAL	£2.28m	£4.19m	£6.47m	£3.9m	£7.16m	£11.05m	£8.77m	£16.09m	£24.86m	£8.9m	£33.42m	£42.32m

## NOTES:

- Rounded gross figures.
- Does not account for 4% top slice – which is the maximum amount that will pay for fund management/administration costs.
- Multiply – Profile of expenditure may be different from the allocation due to ongoing conversations with UK Government.

# IMPLEMENTATION AND DELIVERY PRINCIPLES

## Programming principles

Annual Commissioning Plans will be developed for each of the three financial years to articulate how the activity will be commissioned and delivered under each of the investment priorities and the Multiply programme.

These plans will be the key tool that we use to communicate timeframes for project calls. This approach will also allow for organisations and services to forward plan development activity.

There are a number of considerations that will influence the allocation of spend across the different budget years and investment priorities, which will be further articulated in the annual Commissioning Plans.

Whilst work remains in progress, we anticipate the strategy to develop along these lines:

### Year 1 (2022-23):

Given that the budget profile ramps up significantly over the three-year spending period, year 1 will need to have a strong focus on deliverability. Short lead-in times and development capacity will require Local Authorities and their local partners to cast a realistic eye on existing/committed expenditure that can be supported retrospectively in addition to commissioning any new activity.

At the same time, consideration will be given to complementing UKSPF activity with activity continuing to be delivered within existing EU programmes to avoid any duplication of activity.

It is therefore anticipated that year 1 spend will focus primarily on feasibility work, seed funding and capacity building to enable more substantial activity to be carried out in years 2 and 3.

Taking regard of timescales, this is likely to see a limited, targeted opportunity towards the end of the financial year.

1

## Year 2 (2023-24):

2

Building on the first year, year 2 of UKSPF will see the delivery of more significant projects. Larger calls for funding will be issued and projects that span years 2 and 3 will be considered.

As activity delivered within existing EU programmes starts to tail off during 2023 there will be a clear focus on a managed transition to UKSPF with a strategic approach to provision that needs to be retained, reshaped and decommissioned, all the while bearing in mind the landscape of Welsh Government Strategic funding and delivery.

3

## Year 3 (2024-25):

Year 3 will see the bulk of delivery. There will no longer be any EU funding available, so year 3 will therefore see a core UKSPF offer in terms of the investment priorities across the local economy. Year 3 will also be critical in terms of planning for the period beyond March 2025, and mapping future opportunities and needs.

## Commissioning Principles

The UKSPF in Mid Wales has a number of possible commissioning routes to support project delivery, from in-house Local Authority delivery, open invitations/calls, procurement and strategic commissioning.

The [guidance from UK Government](#) states clearly that all of these options can be used, with a stated preference on undertaking open invitations to submit applications.

The two Local Authorities will be reviewing the commissioning strategy soon, and will likely be looking at a range of options, particularly in year 1, to ensure that we consider a range of factors to ensure deliverability (e.g. mobilisation time-frames, capacity, strategic fit, duplication).

The proposed route to market will be set out in the annual commissioning plans.

## Governance

Whilst Ceredigion Council will serve as the Lead Local Authority for the administration of UKSPF, decision-making will predominantly sit at a local level.

Project proposals will need to be taken to local Regeneration Partnerships or equivalent (made up of public, private and third-sector representatives) in each LA for approval.

Overall strategic fund management and co-ordination will be undertaken at a regional level, taking due regard of existing regional governance structures.

This model will ensure local decision-making to allow for proposals to support the needs of places within Mid Wales, while working within an overall strategic framework to ensure alignment and complementarity with other funding and initiatives (e.g., Growth Deal, Regional Skills Partnership and other regional or national delivery).

## Management and Delivery

Across the three-year delivery period, Growing Mid Wales (GMW) will be able to spend up to 4% of the allocated budget for managing the UKSPF programme. This funding will be used to ensure the appropriate capacity to deliver the UKSPF programme.

In order to draw down the full UKSPF allocation, Ceredigion Council will take on the responsibility of being the lead Local Authority for UKSPF and Multiply across the GMW region.

A programme management office (PMO) function will be set up to ensure delivery of UKSPF can commence from Autumn 2022 onwards. Ceredigion Council will work with Powys County Council to take on the responsibility for the delivery of the fund and the overall programme management of the Mid Wales budget allocation over the three fiscal years.

# WHAT SHOULD BE DONE NOW?

Significant work is being undertaken throughout the autumn of 2022 to mobilise resources, processes and systems to support the delivery of the UKSPF in Mid Wales.

The team is working with UK Government to help shape the strategy and finer detail to support fund delivery. This process will take time, and the commissioning strategy and principles outlined above reflect that.

## Next Steps

In advance of any call or application form being published, we would set out the following key tips in terms of thinking about a UKSPF project proposal:

- Review the UKSPF prospectus and the detailed guidance on the UK Government website and the priorities in this document, to familiarise ourselves with funding expectations.
- Review and reflect on the relevant regional and local plans and strategies and consider the project proposal's role in supporting local needs and priorities.
- Take stock of existing activity supported in the region and ensure there is no duplication/overlap with similar organisations/funded programmes (projects that duplicate/overlap will not be funded).
- Carefully consider the proposed funding allocations and expected outcomes and outputs.

- Review and build up the evidence of need of a project proposal. Be clear on why the project is needed, and what evidence is in place to support it.
- Develop early and active conversations with key strategic and delivery partners to ensure there is no duplication or cross-over of proposals with others.
- Stakeholders are encouraged to continue to have active conversations with the Local Authorities and local partners, to help shape early thinking.



## Mid Wales Regional Investment Plan

UK Shared Prosperity Fund 2022-25

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