



Regional Skills Partnership Board

Annual Report

12 September 2022

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. To provide Members of the Regional Skills Partnership Board with an annual overview and update on progress of the Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership (RSP) Board was 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.
- 2.2. 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.
- 2.3. 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.
- 2.4. 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’, change careers, ‘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, NVQ and GCSE/A level.
- 2.5. 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.
- 2.6. The RSP sits under the wider Growing Mid Wales 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.

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 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.

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.

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. 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.

3. Appointment of the RSP Chair and RSP Team

3.1. 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.

- 3.2. Aggie Caesar-Homden commenced in role as the MWRSP Manager on 8th June 2021.
- 3.3. The RSP Employer Engagement Officer, Jean Farmer, commenced in role in December 2021, and the Project Support Officer, Arinola Ogundeji, joined the RSP team in July 2022.
- 3.4. Recruitment of an RSP Data Development Officer has been unsuccessful to date. This will be revisited in the coming months.
- 3.5. The RSP is currently recruiting for a Project Officer to help lead on the Young Persons Guarantee.

4. RSP Board Membership

- 4.1. The Terms of Reference set out a proposed membership table for the RSP. 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 UWTSU)
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)
Growing Mid Wales Board Cabinet Members representatives	One Cabinet Member from each Local Authority appointed

Careers Wales	Appointed
Job Centre Plus / DWP	Appointed
RSP 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.

- 4.2. There are known gaps with regard to employer/sector membership, for example, Agriculture and Land Use, Food and Drink.
- 4.3. 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.
- 4.4. The RSP Manager has reviewed membership of the three other RSPs and their cluster groups. Membership requests received to date are consistent with the other RSPs.
- 4.5. On 21st September 2021, the GMW Board approved delegated authority be given to the RSP Chair in conjunction with the RSP Manager to review current membership and establish a number of cluster groups.
- 4.6. To date the Public Services Cluster Group and Training Providers Cluster Groups have been established.
- 4.7. A call has been put out to businesses to join the Businesses Cluster Group. It is anticipated that this Cluster Group will be established in the autumn.
- 4.8. A new Cluster Group will be established to focus on the Young Persons Guarantee.
- 4.9. A Regional Strategic Working Group with the Heads of Education within both Local Authorities has been established.
- 4.10. A Regional Strategic Employability Network group has been established in collaboration with the GMW Regional Engagement Team.
- 4.11. Policy area Task and Finish Groups will be created when required.

5. RSP Board Outputs

5.1. The RSP Board has been focused on the key areas of work required to provide a clear programme of work to pursue, including the key areas of structure, needs identification, partnership building and future planning.

5.2. Welsh Government notified the region of the targets that needed to be achieved during the year, 2021 - 2022 detailed in Schedule 2 of the Grant Award Letter. The evidence reports and claims have been submitted accordingly in order to draw down funding from the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA).

Key targets contained in Schedule 2 was as follows:

Task	Specific Activities April 2021 – March 2022	Timeline
Gather, produce, and disseminate Local Market Intelligence (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. Provide secretariat to Wales Employment and Skills Board (WESB).	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 hosting members on a rotation meeting basis. Welsh Government will lead on policy content and providing support to Ministers.	From May 2021 From September 2021
Support the alignment of supply and demand across the skills system.	RSPs to provide baseline data for FE planning, using employer led intelligence and LMI data. Identify and provide timely commentary on regional skills priorities	Ongoing

Further guidance to be provided.	across the sectors. Reference should be made to Welsh Government priorities and Post-16 Planning and Funding Guidance. RSPs to support the development of a revised, strategic approach to post-16 Planning and Funding in light of Covid-19.	
	Identify priorities for apprenticeships based upon employer intelligence.	Ongoing
	Support Welsh Government Apprenticeships Skills Policy to address the needs of Welsh businesses and the wider economy.	Ongoing
	Maintain positive working relationships with universities to agree regional priorities for higher education.	Ongoing
	Work in partnership with schools to inform curriculum development.	Ongoing
	Work in partnership with schools to inform curriculum development.	Ongoing
	Inform priorities for Personalised Learning Accounts.	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.	
	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.	<p>Provide a regional perspective to inform national and UK sector skills strategies.</p> <p>Identify cross-border skills priorities and report back to Welsh Government.</p> <p>Co-ordinate stakeholder/provider support for skills priorities for an Advanced Technology Research Centre.</p>	Ongoing
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. Further Guidance to be provided.	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

6. RSP Board Meetings and Activities

6.1. RSP Board Meetings have been held frequently throughout the year.

- 12 May 2021
- 7 July 2021
- 4 August 2021
- 22 September 2021
- 20 October 2021
- 8 December 2021
- 12 January 2022
- 23 February 2022
- 30 March 2022
- 11 May 2022
- 8 June 2022

6.2. Agenda items have been varied and have included:

- Board Membership
- Cluster Groups
- Growth Deal
- RSP Work Plan
- RSP Website
- Data Cymru support
- Welsh Government Data – presentation on Employer Skills Survey
- Green Skills Report
- Communications Plan
- Careers Wales – presentations
- DWP presentation

6.3. Presentation have been received and discussions followed to help inform the work of the RSP. These have included for example:

- Wavehill Sustainable Skills Cluster Research Report – Mid Wales Manufacturing Group presentation
- Optimised Retrofit Programme (ORP)
- Regional Shared Apprenticeships - Informal Consultation
- New Employability Strategy and Jobs Growth Wales
- React+
- Data Cymru – Green Skills report
- Members Spotlight
- National Conversation Template
- Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT) Community Renewal Fund Pilot: Optimised Retrofit Training Project
- Tourism Strategy Development
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund

6.4. 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.

7. Green Skills Report

7.1. Data Cymru were commissioned by the four RSPs to develop a Green Skills Report which was published in March 2022. The findings of this report have been shared with WG and regional partners.

8. Covid – 19 Reporting.

8.1. Throughout the pandemic, the RSP has submitted Covid-19 impact reports to WG. As part of the anecdotal evidence used in the Covid-19 impact submissions to WG, employer surveys were sent to Mid Wales businesses through RSP Board members and various networks across the region. The final report was a summary of the impact on the region.

9. Support Welsh Government Strategies and policy areas as agreed. Inform the development of skills policy direction post-election.

9.1. 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.

9.2. 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.

- 9.3. To help identify priorities for apprenticeships, based upon employer intelligence, the RSP Partnership Manager and Chair have met 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.
- 9.4. The four RSP Chairs attended a meeting with Vaughan Gething, Minister for Economy on 3rd November 2021.
- 9.5. The RSP Chair and RSP Partnership Manager attend regular meetings with Emma Edworthy, Deputy Director, Employability and Skills Division, Welsh Government.
- 9.6. 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. This is 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 acts as 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.
- 9.7. The RSP Manager also sits on the 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 has been 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. Material has been developed to influence local wellbeing plans and regional development plans and their implementation. The second phase – Engagement - is underway.
- 9.8. 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.
- 9.9. The RSP Manager has been invited to sit on the Welsh Apprenticeship Frameworks Working Group looking at the Travel Services and Retail Apprenticeship Frameworks for Wales.

10. Young Persons Guarantee

- 10.1. The Programme for Government (PfG) sets out an ambitious commitment to deliver the Young Persons Guarantee, giving everyone under 25years the offer of support into work, education, training, or self-employment.
- 10.2. The guarantee was set to ensure no lost generation across Wales due to the predicted economic downturn and the huge rise in unemployment because of Covid and Brexit.
- 10.3. The RSP commissioned Hatch Associates to provide technical support. They have undertaken a mapping exercise of current delivery and shared the finding with Careers Wales for inclusion on their Support Finder platform
- 10.4. A draft report has been developed to identify progression routes, barriers, and an action plan and will be presented to RSP Board members at the next meeting for comments.

11. 3-Year Employment and Skills Plan 2022 - 2025

- 11.1. The RSP has been commissioned by WG to develop the new 3-year Employment and Skills Plan and Action Plan which will identify priorities for regional investment that supports jobs and growth in the Mid Wales region.
- 11.2. The annual Employment and Skills survey has been launched with a closing date of 9th September. This information from employers will be analysed and reflected in the draft report.
- 11.3. As well as the 20-page report for WG, there will be a number of annexes with a focus on:
 - Digital skills
 - Net zero skills
 - National Occupational Standards (NOS)
 - Further Education and Apprenticeships
 - Welsh language
- 11.4. WG have provided the RSPs with relevant Policy Leads to provide additional context and to provide timely updates from their areas. Specific policy workshops have been held over the summer months to help RSPs with this.
- 11.5. The submission deadline for the main report is mid-October. WG recognises that some of the annexes will be submitted later dependant on reports being shared by WG Policy Leads to reflect progress.

12. Other Activities

- 12.1. 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.
- 12.2. 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.
- 12.3. The RSP 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.

13. Chair's Reflections

- 13.1. Since its inception the RSP has successfully positioned itself into a position of influence with a number of regional and national vocational skills organisations.
- 13.2. Operating within a COVID-19 environment has restricted the opportunities for in person engagement and networking for the RSP, its partners and members. It is hoped that this will be less of a challenge in future, and further improve engagement between employers and providers.
- 13.3. There remain some sectors still to engage with the RSP Board, most notably the Agriculture, Food & Drink sector. LANTRA engages with the regional skills and training discussions.

- 13.4. The successful development and delivery of the new 3-year Employment and Skills Plan 2022 – 2025 will be crucial to the employability strategy of the Mid Wales Growth Deal and WG. This will be a key feature of the RSP work plan for the upcoming year.
- 13.5. The newly created Businesses Cluster Group will provide a valuable opportunity for employers to feed into RSP, and regional skills priorities. The notable work of the RSP team since May 2021 has provided a firm foundation for its future work. The team still needs to increase its resource, so it can meet its targets and capability as a national RSP network.
- 13.6. Successful discussions with WG regarding its longer-term funding, mean that it will be able to build upon its successful first year, and support the objectives of the Mid Wales Growth strategy.
- 13.7. RSP Board members have been active in supporting the RSP team with the Young Persons Guarantee and other WG Policy areas through workshops, discussions and surveys.

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