



Cyd-Bwyllgor Corfforedig y Canolbarth
Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee

Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee
Corporate Plan
2023 – 2027

Draft – For Consultation 2023



**Bannau
Brycheiniog**



**Cyngor Sir
CEREDIGION**
County Council



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Foreword

From the Chair and Vice Chair of the Mid Wales Regional Committee

We are pleased to introduce this document which is in response to legislation established by Welsh Government that requires the creation of Regional Corporate Joint Committees (CJC's) across Wales. The Mid Wales Region comprises Powys and Ceredigion County Councils who will establish and oversee the strategic direction of the Economy and its Transport needs. In addition, the region will develop a Strategic Development Plan which will also include the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park.

Given the unique circumstances of Mid Wales we see this as a clear opportunity for the region to become a strong voice for rural growth and regeneration across Wales.

The important thing in responding to this challenge is to be clear about how working together will help improve the lives of people living in Mid Wales. The two Councils and the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park already work together on multiple issues and there has always been a positive and productive relationship between both Members and Officers.

The work of the Mid Wales CJC is at an early stage and clarification will be needed in respect of Transport and Development Planning particularly in respect of resource requirements. We will also work positively with Government and the OECD to determine the right role and function for Economic Wellbeing. We understand our responsibilities to make timely progress and have established sub-committees to progress this important work.

This Corporate Plan sets out our direction of travel for the next five years. It is strategic in nature reflecting the primary responsibility of individual local authorities to deliver services in their own areas. We are committed to sharing resources across services in the region, where we can make a real difference to the lives of our residents.

Chair of the Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee - Councillor James Gibson Watt



Vice Chair of the Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee - Councillor Bryan Davies



Introduction

Corporate Joint Committees

The Welsh Government introduced legislation in 2021 to formalise the way in which local authorities work together. This legislation is called 'The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021' and provided for the creation of Corporate Joint Committees. These Committees are made up of Local Government Authorities which in the Mid Wales Region include Ceredigion County Council, Powys County Council, and the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park (BBNP) (the latter of which is involved in matters relating specifically to strategic planning).

The Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee will work together on the service areas of Strategic Planning, Economic Wellbeing, and Transport. The two Councils and the BBNP already have a long record of collaborating on areas of the economy under the auspices of the Mid Wales Growth Deal and Growing Mid Wales.

In addition, the Councils have long collaborated on matters relating to Transport through the TraCC Partnership (Trafnidiaeth Canolbarth Cymru / Mid Wales Transportation). This is reflected in the Joint Mid Wales Local Transport Plan which was published in 2015.

The Corporate Joint Committee is made up of the Leaders of Powys and Ceredigion County Councils and the Chair of the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park. The Council Leaders can vote on all matters included in the CJC agreement, and the Chair of the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park can vote on matters relating to Strategic Planning.

This document sets out at a strategic level; what we are doing, how we are doing it, and the governance arrangements that are in place to ensure compliance with Welsh Government legislation and our duties as a public sector organisation. More importantly, however, this document sets out how the Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee will seek to improve the lives of people living in Mid Wales.

The Mid Wales Region –

An Overview

Mid Wales is one of the most sparsely populated areas of the country representing 34% of the land mass of Wales. The region is bordered by fourteen local authority areas, two of which are in England. The population is approximately 205,000 which is both declining and ageing. The more westerly part of the region is one of the Welsh-speaking heartlands of Wales.

The region has several challenging economic conditions which need to be addressed not least a reduction of economic activity over a sustained period. As a predominantly rural area, transport continues to be a challenge for both work and leisure, especially given that

the cost of energy has increased significantly. Although Planning Development is a responsibility for local authorities to administer there also needs to be a strategic framework which ensures alignment with Welsh Planning Policy which will be a feature of this plan.

Our Economy

The Mid Wales economy is often characterised as a large and predominantly rural region. It is known for its natural beauty, strong cultural identity 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 – 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 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 Gross Value Added (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. However, whilst the challenges we face are not unique – the opportunities we have are indeed distinctive and rooted within our region.



- 205,000 people employed
- 95,400 people employed
- % employed > Welsh average

- Home to two Universities (Aberystwyth and UWTSU)
- Home to the Centre for Alternative Technology (also offering HE courses)
- More than 95% of Aberystwyth's research is internationally recognised
- Educational attainment at Level 2 is 7.5% higher than the Welsh average
- 38.8% residents with NVQ4+

Notable Strengths

- Agriculture
- Food & Drink
- Tourism
- Higher-Value Manufacturing
- Defence & Security Assets

Generating:

- £3.6bn GVA annually
- £17,509 GVA per head

- 6966 km² of land (39% of Wales)
- 7.25m visitors attracted annually to the region's outstanding natural and cultural landscapes

Our People

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

At an overall population of 205,900, Mid Wales is characterised by an ageing population and a net out-migration of young people. Since 2014, the region has seen an overall decline in its population of around 1%. 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.

Labour Market

There are some 91,000 people in employment in Mid Wales, with economic activity rates in line with Welsh and UK averages, driven by high levels of self-employment. Levels of unemployment in the region are comparatively low at 3.7% in July 2022 and the region has seen an improvement in unemployment numbers compared to Wales since 2001.

Despite this, underemployment, low earnings and seasonal employment remain key challenges. Average full-time weekly earnings for example were 85% of the UK average in 2016 and 97% of the Wales average.

Over the past five years, employment in Mid Wales has decreased by around 54%. Jobs are particularly concentrated in Health, Manufacturing and Education. The largest increases in employment growth have been in Professional Services, Information and Communication, Agriculture, forestry and fishing. Other sectors have also demonstrated significant growth, illustrating the potential for further expansion in the future.

Learning & Skills

The region has two Universities which contribute to high level skills leading to world class research and development, as well as a vibrant and growing economy. The recent creation of the Mid Wales Regional Learning and Skills Partnership is ensuring local input into the matching of employer skills needs with education and skills providers. This has led to learning pathways to local employment and apprenticeships.

Mid Wales performs well in educational attainment with levels of achievement at GCSE level exceeding the Welsh average. The proportion of young people not in Employment, Education and Training (NEETS) is low, while the qualifications profile of Mid Wales performs better than the Welsh average – but with lower rates of older people upskilling.

Despite these strengths, skills gaps and recruitment difficulties are commonplace amongst Mid Wales employers. 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). Attracting more young people to live, work and study in Mid Wales is vital for inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

For the region to thrive it must reduce the existing trend of young people leaving the area for education and jobs and must be able to retain and attract talent by creating new high value employment opportunities.

Deprivation

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. Statistical measures do not tend to capture the true nature of rural disadvantage, however.

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 from 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.

Transport

Transport connectivity both inside and outside of Mid Wales is crucial to economic flows and future growth. The region has 945 km (587 miles) of Trunk and A roads connecting the region with North and South Wales and east to the West Midlands. There are also two railway corridors (Cambrian Main line/Coast and the Heart of Wales line) which run north-south and east-west. Rail links in Mid Wales are characterised by low service frequency, slow line speeds and limited direct services to major UK cities with the only regular principal service being the two-hourly Aberystwyth to Birmingham International through services.

There is a need to improve journey time reliability and capacity, by improving the safety and resilience of the network to support and grow the transition to a low carbon economy. Investment in key strategic corridors to ensure resilience and infrastructure to provide a net zero transport provision across the Mid Wales Road network. This is vitally important to support access to service, tourism and freight, especially in relation to the A487 and links to Fishguard, in addition to the A483, A458 cross-border routes and the A44 across the region.

Due to its rurality, Mid Wales has a high dependence on the private car for transport and less than 1% of road miles are driven by buses. The region also has below average take up of electric vehicles with limited charging points compared to the UK average.

The Mid Wales Region

Our Purpose and Vision

In developing a vision for the Mid Wales Region that reflects the needs of both Councils and the National Park it is essential that we focus on priorities that are shared.

The Mid Wales Region has a range of challenges that are common. These include, amongst others; the level of rurality, an aging population, access to services, the Welsh Language, environmental protection and improvement, reducing inequalities, the economy and employment opportunities, transport and accessibility.

The Corporate Joint Committee is united in focusing on the changes that need to be made to improve wellbeing for our communities across the region in the areas of the Economy, Transport and Strategic Planning. The majority of services will of course continue to be delivered by the individual local authorities. Where there is mutual benefit and advantage by working together strategically on matters relating to the economy, transport and planning, we will seek new ways of working that are productive, impactful, and efficient.

Having considered the shared strategic priorities of each Council and the BBNP, the region sets out the following vision statement which we believe reflects our collective aspirations.

Vision for Mid Wales 2022-2027

‘Mid Wales will be a region that enables and encourages sustainable, environmentally friendly, and inclusive places to live, where residents have access to plentiful employment opportunities, culturally rich and diverse communities, and high-quality education, skills, and training. The Local Authorities will collaborate strategically on matters relating to the economy, transport and strategic planning.

Mid Wales will be a strong voice for rural growth and regeneration and will promote inclusivity, the Welsh language, and equality of opportunity.

The Vision will function as an overarching guide to the way in which services are developed on a regional basis. Although matters relating to the Economy, Transport and Strategic Planning are all connected, strategies and policies can sometimes be developed in isolation. The regional Vision will function as an overarching principle by which these services will be developed for the future.

The Mid Wales Region

Our Priorities for the Region

The three areas that the Corporate Joint Committee will focus on are limited to economy, transport and planning development. These are service areas that can benefit significantly from increased collaboration across the region. The following paragraphs provide further detail about work that will be progressed over the coming years, providing demonstrable benefit to our communities.

The Economy –

The region has been collaborating with a wide range of partners for many years with a particularly focus on the economy. This resulted in a Strategci Economic Plan which has recently been updated and is partly reproduced here to represent the strategic direction of the region.

This update to the Growing Mid Wales Strategic Economic Plan highlights our collective ambition and the economic potential for Mid Wales. It sets out the future that we want to build together to achieve sustainable and relevant economic growth, where our people and businesses have parity of opportunity to grow their ideas and have their potential nurtured. We have identified opportunities for direct public intervention in public infrastructure and our workforce alongside private investment opportunities in key regional assets. We are confident that this combined approach will deliver strong results as part of a team approach.

The region is well-known as a predominantly rural area, accounting for 39% of the land mass of Wales; but is less well-known as a place where there is a wealth of opportunity waiting to be unlocked.

The region has significant opportunities both to strengthen existing economic sectors and stimulate economic drivers that will create growth and investment in regional businesses and the labour market. At a time when there is considerable economic uncertainty due to a range of externalities, it is crucial that all parts of Wales and the UK play their part in strengthening the economic resilience and productivity of their regional economies.

There is significant opportunity to take advantage of existing private sector ambition to develop assets of regional importance with tangible and significant economic impact, from our strengths in our research capability, natural landscapes, skilled workforce and industry.

The region's economy however has its challenges. Market failure is prevalent following decades of under-investment and structural decline. Whilst there have been encouraging signs of employment and business growth in key sectors across the region (construction, tourism, food & manufacturing), there remains a significant productivity challenge owing to the underlying structural weaknesses of the economy (comparatively narrow economic base, poor transport links, changing population demographic) that could continue to reinforce a cycle of decline unless addressed.

Context

Since the first Growing Mid Wales Vision Document was agreed in early 2020, there have been several major events which have caused the economic context to fundamentally change. It was important to update the document to consider this changed context, and the greater challenges they pose in developing the regional economy of Mid Wales.

Coronavirus Pandemic

The economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic on Mid Wales cannot be understated. The business demography of the region, made up of predominantly SMEs, meant that many small businesses struggled to survive, with some businesses actively opting to cease trading. The tourism sector – one of the largest employers in the region – was also disproportionately affected. Now in recovery mode, the historically low levels of unemployment in the region have increased, reflecting a rise in the long-term sick which may be partly attributable to the pandemic.

EU Transition

Britain leaving the EU has resulted in much change for Mid Wales businesses. In addition to supply chain issues and increased costs for exporters due to changes with customs and border tariffs, sectors such as hospitality and agriculture report significant issues with labour supply due to the loss of migrant workers from the EU.

Economic Downturn and Cost of Living Crisis

The cost-of-living crisis is fundamentally caused by higher inflation, and low wage growth leaving many households worse off in real terms – paying more for their food, energy and fuel. The crisis has been exacerbated by short-term factors, such as the Ukraine war, but the pressure on living standards has long-term trends, such as low productivity growth and increased market power of firms.

Climate Emergency

The need to consider our impacts on the environment and targets set both nationally and locally will be essential given the current climate emergency. This includes how we continue to support the growth and development of the Mid Wales economy whilst moving towards Net Zero. Both Welsh and UK Governments have released several strategies to set out plans and priorities for meeting our climate change targets.

Energy

Energy prices and our current dependency on importing energy into the UK are issues that have recently come sharply into focus as a result on the war in Ukraine. These issues relate strongly to the climate emergency agenda and the need for greater amounts of our energy to come from renewable energy sources. In addition, the region is severely constrained by the ability to export energy due to energy infrastructure capacity.

Funding

EU Transition has seen fundamental changes to the way regional investment funding

is allocated and delivered, resulting in a more complex funding and delivery landscape. Local Authorities in Wales have had to adapt quickly to take advantage of opportunities arising from the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund, Community Renewal Fund and the Shared Prosperity Fund. The region will continue to monitor funding announcements to ensure we are well placed to take advantage of future opportunities to secure investment.

Delivery Landscape

As a result of the changes to the funding landscape, the delivery landscape has become more fragmented and harder to navigate. Key backbone operations that were delivered on a pan-Wales basis under EU funding have ceased to operate, leaving strategic gaps which may or may not be filled by new funding. Of particular concern is funding for R&I activities.

The Challenges to Overcome

Since the establishment of the Growing Mid Wales Partnership in 2015, partners have seen a strengthening of support for, and focus on growing the Mid Wales economy. While much has been achieved to ensure a strong focus on pursuing regional economic growth, more needs to be done. It will require much stronger working and recognition of the Mid Wales economy across sectors and institutions – with the full support of both Governments to not only support growth opportunities, but also to invest in our underlying economic and social infrastructure.

Economic performance

Despite several opportunities and positive improvements in the regional economy, Mid Wales continues to lag behind other Welsh and UK regions on several key issues:

LOW & LAGGING PRODUCTIVITY: Mid Wales continues to lag behind other Welsh and UK regions in real and per head terms due to the seasonality and structure of its employment base.

A DECLINING, AGEING POPULATION: Rural depopulation, especially of young people, and a changing demographic - demonstrating the 'pinched middle' of a relatively high older population and a proportionately low working age population, and the resulting effect this can have on Welsh language strongholds.

NARROW AND VULNERABLE ECONOMIC BASE: Leading 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. Employment seasonality also adds vulnerability.

PROJECTED EMPLOYMENT DECLINE: forecasts show the Welsh economy growing by 1.7% during the period 20 (+ 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 exacerbated by a lack of focus on the issue in Mid Wales. Weaknesses in regional skills infrastructure exacerbates

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.

MARKET FAILURE: Underlying structural economic weaknesses aligned with decades of under-investment by the public sector has exacerbated market failure. Market failure is prevalent throughout the economy and can be clearly evidenced through weak and relatively static commercial and residential build rates, declining and narrowing business base and the inadequate state of our digital, road and energy grid infrastructure – which is in critical need of public sector intervention.

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 is masking rural poverty which is a real cause for concern amongst local authorities and policy makers.

There is also a new economic context to consider. Since the drafting of the first GMW Vision document in 2020, the macro-economic context has greatly changed. As well as continuing to recover from the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic, Mid Wales businesses and residents have had to navigate new legislation and arrangements arising out of EU transition, as well as the economic downturn partially triggered by the Russia-Ukraine war and the resulting cost of living crisis. Long standing issues will become even tougher to address and will require more focused and concentrated effort to make a step change to the Mid Wales economy.

Addressing these issues will require a step change in the way we collectively work and will require a significant set of interventions to both address these trends by providing the basis for new higher value economic growth and attract a new, economically mobile population. Tackling these issues will not be easy, or inexpensive. However, we are collectively clear that as a region if we are to see the regional economy perform as it should; and if we are to take advantage of the opportunities available to us – then it must be the joint focus of regional partners and both Governments to address.

Our Ambition

Our ambition is for Mid Wales to take full advantage of the opportunities available to create and support economic and social growth by overcoming its challenges to become a fairer, smarter region that contributes to its full potential to address its productivity challenge.

Our Vision for Mid Wales in 2035

By 2035, Mid Wales will be:

“An enterprising and distinctive region delivering sustainable economic growth for future generations driven by innovation, skills, connectivity and more productive jobs supporting prosperous and bilingual communities.”

Through collaborative and integrated working, we will build on our unique assets to ensure that the region’s economy is recognised by the following characteristics:



ENTERPRISING – open for business, new and old. A place to start and grow enterprise to enhance regional productivity with a good quality of life.



SKILLED – a skilled and flexible labour market supported by academic and vocational learning that responds to industry demands that reverses current population trends.



INNOVATIVE – a test bed for innovation, developing new products and processes capitalising on existing research and industry strengths and creating new/strengthening existing industrial clusters.



CONNECTED – a fully connected region, unlocking its economic potential driving business growth and innovation and improving social and labour mobility.



PRODUCTIVE – a strong, productive economy providing the right conditions for business to generate better quality, higher paid jobs alongside better employment opportunity.



PROSPEROUS – a regional economy that is rooted in fairness and equality of opportunity with accessible training and employment pathways.



DISTINCTIVE – a region with a unique natural and cultural landscape & heritage, offering an exceptional quality of life and potential to lead UK decarbonisation and clean growth.



The Mid Wales Region

Transport

Transport connectivity both inside and outside of Mid Wales is crucial to economic flows and future growth. The region has 945 km (587 miles) of Trunk and A roads connecting the region with North and South Wales and east to the West Midlands. There are also two railway corridors (Cambrian Main line/Coast and the Heart of Wales line) which run north-south and east-west. Rail links in Mid Wales are characterised by low service frequency, slow line speeds and limited direct services to major UK cities with the only regular principal service being the two-hourly Aberystwyth to Birmingham International through services.

There is a need to improve journey time reliability and capacity, by improving the safety and resilience of the network to support and grow the transition to a low carbon economy. Investment in key routes such as the A483/A489 Newtown Bypass and the A487 Dyfi Bridge north of Machynlleth provide resilience to the Mid Wales' Road network. Continued investment is required to secure these strategic corridors of labour and goods mobility to the future – especially in relation to the A487 and the need to improve links to Fishguard as well as the A483, A458 cross-border routes and the A44 across the region. Due to its rurality, Mid Wales has a high dependence on the private car for transport and less than 1% of road miles are driven by buses. The region also has below average take up of electric vehicles with limited charging points compared to the UK average.

Joint Mid Wales Local Transport Plan 2015

The TraCC Joint Mid Wales Transport Plan 2015 sets out a vision for transport in Mid Wales. This vision was developed by working with a range of stakeholders whilst developing the Plan. Although this plan and vision was developed some years ago it is still as relevant today.

Vision for Transport in Mid Wales (LTP 2015)

‘The Mid Wales Local Authorities will plan for and deliver in partnership, an integrated and affordable transport system that facilitates economic development, ensures access for all to services and opportunities, sustains and improves the quality of community life, and makes an active contribution to the management of carbon and the quality of the environment.’

Since this vision was created, the 2015 plan has been held over whilst delivery has progressed, and more recently, new guidance from Welsh Government has been produced to allow a new Regional Transport Plan to be developed. The guidance was issued in July 2023 and will be considered carefully by the Regional Transport Planning Sub-committee both in terms of timeline for delivery and the resource implications before a delivery plan is produced for consideration by the CJC.

The CJC will develop policies for the promotion and encouragement of safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport to, from and within its area, which will implement the Regional Transport Plan. Once the plan and its policies have been agreed each highway authority (Ceredigion and Powys Council's) will need to write a delivery plan for policies that have been developed.

The Mid Wales Region

Strategic Development Planning

The following is an extract from Welsh Governments ‘Future Wales – A National Plan 2040’, which sets out the structure of the Welsh planning system: -

‘Our planning system is development plan led. Development plans are prepared at national, regional and local scales, with the three tiers together in combination comprising ‘the development plan.’ The Welsh Government by producing Future Wales contributes the national tier of the development plan. This is the highest tier of development plan. Strategic Development Plans cover regional and sub-regional scales and Local Development Plans consider issues at the local scale. The three tiers of the development plan should be aligned and complement each other.

Strategic Development Plans, which have not yet been prepared in any region, are required to be in conformity with Future Wales. Similarly, Local Development Plans must be in conformity with Future Wales and the Strategic Development Plan for their area.'

Strategic Development Planning for the region will help identify, in a spatial planning context, the most effective and appropriate Planning Policies for the region under which Local Development Plans (LDP) will be produced. In policy terms such Plans will need to be in alignment with national development plan guidance. Welsh Government have been clear in stating that it does not seek to take decisions that are most appropriately taken at a regional or local level but to provide strategic direction for all scales of planning. At the same time there is a clear requirement for regional and local plans to conform with 'Future Wales,' and the spatial strategy.

The development of a Regional Development Plan will take significant time with the full process taking between 5 and 6 years to complete. In addition, there will need to be sufficient dedicated resources to undertake this work which does not currently exist in budgetary terms.

The Corporate Joint Committee recently concluded that a dedicated SDP team should be created that will work independently of individual LDP's on a Strategic Plan. Once a regional SDP has been created, by 2028/29, LDP Lites will be developed concluding in a Regional Strategic Development Plan and individual Council/National Park LDP Lites by 2031/32.

This approach is not without significant challenge in that the creation of an SDP team will require additional resource which is yet to be identified. In addition, there is already a sparsity of recruits for Planning posts across the region and the recruitment to an SDP team would deplete existing teams, potentially leaving gaps in resource and capacity at a local level.

In addition, although Ceredigion and Bannau Brycheiniog LDP's are not timebound with a 'drop dead date' for when they expire, Powys' LDP is currently time expired. Given the resource demand to complete a new LDP this may impact on the availability of Officers to contribute to a regional SDP. Clarification is currently being sought from Welsh Government on the implications for Powys of moving directly to the production of an SDP in preference to continuing with a new LDP.

Notwithstanding the benefits that will come from a more strategic approach to Planning Development, there also remains significant challenge within the region especially in relation to Special Areas of Conservation (SACS) that impact on the River Wye, Teifi and Usk. In addition, given the reliance on agriculture, issues relating to phosphates and the imminent TAN15 flood zones will need careful consideration especially in how they impact on limiting housing and economic development.

The Mid Wales Region

Wellbeing Statement

Contribution to the national well-being goals.

The Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 seeks to improve the social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing of Wales by requiring public bodies to work together to create a sustainable Wales.

It is intended to help create a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future. There are 7 national well-being goals that set out a shared vision for all public bodies to work towards which are: -

1. A Prosperous Wales
2. A Resilient Wales
3. A Healthier Wales
4. A More Equal Wales
5. A Wales of Cohesive Communities
6. A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language
7. A Globally Responsible Wales

The individual Councils and the National Park have already set out how they will be contributing to the national wellbeing objectives in their respective Corporate Strategies. It is essential, however, that we assess how the CJC Regional Strategy also contributes to the national well-being goals. The following section of this Plan sets out the CJC's Corporate Well-being Objectives.

In addition, the Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee has adopted the Welsh Governments 'Five Ways of Working' principles which ensure that plans are long term, preventative, integrated, collaborative, and involve stakeholders. This will ensure that the sustainable development duty placed on public bodies throughout Wales is embedded in the way that each organisation works.

As this duty has been in place for many years, all the public bodies who are party to the Mid Wales CJC corporate plan are already experienced with applying these ways of working. As the Mid Wales CJC is in the early stages of development, detailed assessments of how our work will comply with these principles are yet to be applied. It is fully accepted, however, that this will need to be done in in both a transparent and measured way as plans develop. In the meantime, and for clarity, we have set out below how we will ensure the 'Five Ways of Working' will be used to test our sustainable development duty. These principles have been used in the development of our Wellbeing Objectives and will continue to be used as the region progresses their implementation.

Long Term

The Future Generations Act has long been adopted by public bodies across Wales as a government policy that guides how such organisations operate. It is fully recognised that decisions and plans need to consider how any resulting actions may impact on the wellbeing of our communities in the long term. For example, the development of the Growth Deal has already used the Five Ways of Working in its development. As detailed project plans develop, assessments will be used to ensure the long-term impact of projects are fully understood before approval to proceed is given. As work on Regional Transport and Strategic Development plans mature, similar detailed assessments will also be undertaken at each stage of the process.

Prevention

It is clear that given the challenges facing the environment, health, and society in general, that we ensure that decisions taken in the future avoid repeating mistakes of the past. In particular, careful consideration needs to be given to the often-unforeseen consequences of actions that are sometimes taken in isolation, and the wider impact they may have. Policies and strategies will need to be tested using techniques such as 'scenario planning' to identify threats and opportunities so that adverse impacts are avoided or at least mitigated against. The application of a detailed Impact Assessment using the Powys County Council IA template has helped to assess the Corporate Plans impact on a wide range of matters including the environment, equalities, Welsh Language, and of course the National Wellbeing Goals.

Integration

The basis used for the Wellbeing goals adopted for this Corporate Plan has been the existing Corporate Plans of each of the constituent CJC members. These existing plans had already been developed with the Future Generations Act as a guiding principle and as such all the plans have been tested against the WG Act. This evidences an integrated approach to the creation of the Mid Wales Corporate Plan. As the plan is developed into more detailed actions, careful consideration will be given to existing and emerging plans across Wales to ensure an ongoing integrated approach. Given the regions significant border with England, the principle of integration will also include partners across the border.

Collaboration

The Mid Wales CJC is physically at the heart of Wales. As such the constituent bodies have long recognised the importance of working in ways that ensure organisations both within, and outside the area are included in the development of plans. The term collaboration has been a watch word amongst CJC members for many years and can be evidence in a wide range of initiatives. For example, the development of the Growing Mid Wales Partnership (GMWP), which has been in existence for many years, is a practical example of collaboration in practice relating to the region's economy. This collaboration has been used to inform the creation

of the Mid Wales Growth Deal and the partnership is expected to continue in its role for many years to come.

Involvement

As with all public body 'Strategic Plans,' this Corporate Plan will be subject to wide ranging consultation before it is finalised. It has been stated throughout the document that the Mid Wales CJC will develop and mature further over the coming years. As it does so, more detailed plans will come forward and ongoing consultation will be necessary to ensure all stakeholders continue to be involved with plans and subsequent actions that may impact on their lives. For example, the development of a Transport Plan to replace the current Joint Mid Wales Transport Plan will need wide ranging involvement of others to ensure it is integrated, preventative, and long term. This will be a duty of Welsh Government but just as importantly it is a long-established way of working that is already embedded in the regions approach.

Assessment of Compliance

To ensure a consistent and rigorous approach to assessing the application of the 'Five Ways of Working' we will introduce an assessment template similar to that which has been used for the National Wellbeing Goals. This will be applied to each Wellbeing Objective as it progresses and develops into implementation. As the regions Wellbeing Objectives are at an early stage there is an opportunity to ensure rigorous compliance from the outset.

Mid Wales Regional Wellbeing Objectives

The following Well-being objectives will act as a guide for the direction and purpose of the region. They are strategic by nature and will be at the forefront of the regions collaborative work. They will need to be inter-linked in terms of mutual and cross cutting benefits. For example, transport is key to ensuring access to meaningful employment which in turn contributes to a vibrant economy. In a similar way, digital solutions will remove barriers to business location and flexible approaches to working, that benefit both employers and employees. Strategic Planning also has the potential to support local sustainable economic growth.

These interdependencies will need to be reflected in the way that progress is made and measured.

Well-being Objective 1

‘To improve the economic well-being of Mid Wales for future generations by narrowing the gap between key economic indicators such as wage rates and productivity relative to other parts of Wales and the UK and creating sustainable growth.’

The Mid Wales Growth Deal has been developed using the latest guidance and advice from both Welsh Government and UK Government and has been endorsed by both organisations. It is supported by an Economic Advisory Group which is made up of Business leaders from across the region.

The Growth Deal is designed to identify the most advantageous investment opportunities across a range of strategic priority areas. This work is complimented by each Council and the BBNP through a wide range of local economic development initiatives that will ensure sustainable growth for communities across the region. The Corporate Joint Committees Corporate Plan will focus on those things that will benefit from regional collaboration.

Detailed delivery plans are overseen and managed by a dedicated Programme Office whilst strategic oversight is provided by a Management Group which includes the Senior Responsible Officers (SRO's) and Strategic Leads, with Welsh Government and UK Government observers in attendance.

Well-being Objective 2

‘To collaboratively and sustainably improve transport connectivity and infrastructure in Mid Wales to benefit the residents who live and work in the region, grow the economy and raise productivity.’

There have been some key investments in the region that will have a long-lasting impact on travel times and CO2 emissions including the Newtown By-pass and the Ddyfi Bridge improvement scheme. Although the Joint Mid Wales Transport Plan (JMWTP) identified a range of other such improvements it is recognised that Welsh Government now want to focus future investment on more sustainable forms of transport for both work and recreation. Guidance relating to the replacement of existing JMWTP was provided in July 2023 and the region will use this to undertake a complete review of current priorities against future needs.

The Corporate Joint Committee will focus on delivering the strategic improvements that can be made to the transport system in Mid Wales – those opportunities that are truly regional.

Wellbeing Objective 3

‘To provide consistent regional policies and guidance for Planning Development in Mid Wales that clearly set out our priorities for spatial growth.’

It is clear from the Welsh Government that there will be a hierarchy of Development Plans that are linked to address national strategic policies and objectives. The ‘Future Wales’ plan will set out the Welsh Government’s framework for Planning Development across the Country, which will be followed by Regional Development Plans (RDP’s) and Local Development Plans (LDP’s). Clearly there will need to be consistency with a golden thread running through all three levels of plan that will ensure policy alignment throughout the Planning system.

The introduction of an additional layer of Planning Policy into the planning system will require additional resources to deliver. Discussions are currently ongoing with Welsh Government to identify the resources required, and once identified, the appointment of a delivery team with the necessary skills and knowledge will take place.

It will, however, take time to ensure, as with Local Development Plans, that the emerging Regional Plan is compliant with guidance and planning law, and meets the needs of the region and local communities.

Alignment with National Goals –

The following section sets out how the region will align with Welsh Government's national goals.

▪ A prosperous Wales

The delivery of the Growth Deal over the next decade and beyond will help improve the economic health of the region by increasing the number of jobs, improving pay, and increasing investment. The refreshed Regional Transport Plan will help to identify improvements in the way that transport is planned and delivered that will increase access to work opportunities. The Strategic Development Plan will help to identify opportunities for sustainable development on a regional basis that will feed into LDP's that will impact positively on the prosperity of local communities.

▪ A resilient Wales

The principles of the National Goals have already been used to underpin the development of projects within the Mid Wales Growth Deal and will continue to be used to drive a sustainable approach to economic development. A refreshed Transport Strategy for the region and the creation of a SDP will provide opportunity to align regional policy with national direction, with a particular focus on sustainability.

▪ A Healthier Wales

Improving the prosperity of the Mid Wales population will help improve Health benefits for communities. The correlation between increased prosperity and health is well evidenced through research. Accessible, sustainable transport is also key to enabling people to access health services and a healthy lifestyle. Planning policy which steers local decision making also has the capacity to impact positively on healthy lifestyles.

▪ **A More Equal Wales**

Expanding opportunities across the region to access jobs will help those who are currently excluded.

▪ **A Wales of Cohesive Communities**

Improvements to the economy of Mid Wales will help ensure inclusivity and resilience within communities, thus increasing cohesiveness.

▪ **A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language**

Increasing opportunities for economic activity, access to work and services, alongside an improved and a sustainable physical environment will help retain people in the region. This will in turn contribute to the strengthening of local culture and the Welsh Language.

▪ **A Globally Responsible Wales**

With sustainability and the environment at the heart of our plans for the economy, transport, and planning development there will be increased alignment between national and local actions.

Corporate Wellbeing Objectives			
National Wellbeing Goals	WBO1	WB02	WB03
Prosperous	●	●	
Resilient	●	●	●
Healthier	●		●
More Equal	●	●	●
Cohesive			●
Culture		●	●
Global	●		

Action Plans

To progress the Vision and Objectives set out in this document an action plan has been agreed that will help ensure practical and timely progress. The action plan will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that the plan is being enacted, and any changes to make the plan more effective are embedded. These action plans are intentionally strategic and high level in that more detailed plans will exist at operational level. These action plans are specifically intended to allow a strategic assessment as to whether progress is being made and if not, what needs to happen to address any shortcomings.

The Economy – Action Plan

Action	Timescale	Accountability
Develop an action plan for the delivery of the recently revised Growing Mid Wales Partnership - Strategic Economic Plan 2023.		

Transport

Action	Timescale	Accountability
Develop an action plan for the delivery of the recently revised Growing Mid Wales Partnership - Strategic Economic Plan 2023.		
Assess Welsh Government guidelines on the production of a new regional transport plan from the point of receipt.		
Using Welsh Government Guidelines, produce a draft work programme that is timebound from inception to completion.		

Strategic Planning Development

Action	Timescale	Accountability
Develop an action plan for the delivery of the recently revised Growing Mid Wales Partnership - Strategic Economic Plan 2023.		
Produce a detailed plan including timescales, milestones and resource requirements for approval by the CJC that meets the guidance issued by Welsh Government on the production of a Regional Strategic Development Plan (RSFP).		

Regional Partners

In developing this Corporate Strategy careful consideration has been given to our regional partners. The term 'regional' in this instance is used to describe those organisations that already collaborate closely with the local authorities and whose work impacts both directly and indirectly on the region's services, specifically concerning the economy, transport and planning development.

Partners include Local Health Boards, Local Service Boards, bordering Local Authorities in Wales and England, Welsh Government and UK Government amongst others.

The local authorities in the Mid Wales Region are already involved in a number of other regional partnerships which include the Partnership Boards, and Public Service Boards. It will be important to consider the impact of an additional Partnership on existing commitments together with the need to share information with existing partners to avoid duplication and/or confusion. In addition, the capacity to manage and support multiple partnerships will need monitoring.

Engagement with an increased range of partners and stakeholders will take place during the consultation process in respect of this Corporate Plan whilst it is still in draft form. The final draft, which will be considered by the CJC in the Autumn of this year, will allow Members to consider the views of partners as well as the wider public and make any necessary changes before the plan is ratified.

In addition, as the work of the CJC is still at an early stage, both this Plan and associated CJC work will evolve over time, and ongoing engagement will be key to make sure the plan is representative of the regions priorities as it matures.

Public Sector Duties

The CJC as a public body will need to ensure it fulfils its public sector duties in the same way that the constituent bodies already do. In particular the CJC will need to be explicit as to how it is going to meet its responsibilities in respect of the following:

-

- **Promote and conduct sustainable development.**
- **Promote the Welsh Language.**
- **Enable greater diversity and equality.**
- **Reduce the inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage.**
- **Seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity.**

The Mid Wales CJC has only recently been formed and there is still work to do to set out explicitly what is needed to fulfil these duties. As the constituent bodies are already undertaking this work there will be an understanding of what is required to ensure that these duties are fully met. This will ensure that as a minimum the CJC's intent is to meet these duties and over time exceed the statutory requirements. Reference has also been made throughout this strategy to many of the duties that need to be fulfilled. In addition, a detailed Impact Assessment has been undertaken to ensure the plan currently complies with a broad range of Welsh Government policies.

As has been identified, more still needs to be done and the CJC will set out in detail plans to ensure full compliance within the next 12 months. This will include a Biodiversity Duty Plan for the remaining period of the plan.

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Welsh Government Strategies and Policies

In formulating this Plan, account has been taken of Welsh Government Strategies and Policies to ensure consistency and alignment with National and Regional plans. Some of the main Welsh Government strategies are referenced here. This is not an exhaustive list, but efforts have been made to consider the relevance of wider Welsh Government Strategy and Policy, the source of which may not be specifically referenced here.

It is important, however, that this document focuses on what, how, and when the Region will address strategic challenges for the economy, planning and transport and does not just mirror Welsh Government policy. The following sections set out the key Welsh Government strategies that have been used to develop this plan.

Future Wales – National Plan 2040

The structure of the Welsh Planning System

The Welsh Planning System is development plan led with an expectation that Plans will be developed on a national, regional and local basis. These three tiers will comprise ‘the development plan.’

The Welsh Governments ‘Future Wales’ document states that the National tier of the Development Plan process will be the highest tier. Strategic Development Plans will cover regional and sub regional scale, and Local Development Plans will consider local development policy.

The expectation is that the three tiers of the development plan will align and complement each other. ‘Future Wales’ will need to be reflected in the development of second and third tier plans conforming with guidance. Decisions flowing from the Strategic Development Plan process will need to align and accord with ‘Future Wales’ as will Local Development Plans.

The development of the Welsh Planning system is predicated on the spatial planning principle. In essence WG strategy and policy is not intended to determine local planning decisions but provide guidance, context, policies, and a framework within which more local decisions are taken.

Llwybr Newydd – Transport Strategy 2021

Welsh Government Vision

‘An Accessible, Sustainable and Efficient Transport System.’

Llwybr Newydd – or new path in Welsh – is Welsh Governments new transport strategy. It sets out the vision for how the Welsh transport system

can deliver Government priorities, helping to put the Country on a pathway to creating a more prosperous, green and equal society.

Using the five ways of working set out in the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the strategy has extensively engaged with transport users, service providers and key partners to co-produce this new direction of travel. As well as setting out short-term priorities and long-term ambitions, it has developed nine mini plans explaining how Welsh Government will deliver them for different transport modes and sectors.

Llwybr Newydd is also supported by a more detailed Mobility in Wales report, the Transport Data and Trends report, and an Integrated Sustainability Appraisal. It will require governments, local authorities, transport providers (both commercial and third sector) and colleagues in other policy areas to work together to help ensure that transport contributes to the current and future well-being of Wales; to set Wales on a new path.

The Vision is further explained for clarity purposes as follows: -

‘Accessible’ - this means a system that meets the relevant policy and regulatory standards on equality, access, human rights, and the Welsh language, and aims to remove the physical, attitudinal, environmental, systemic, linguistic and economic barriers that prevent people from using sustainable transport services and infrastructure.

‘Sustainable’ - means a transport system that meets the needs of the present whilst protecting the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. ‘

‘Efficient’ - means a transport system that gets people where they want to go, when they want to go there, making best use of resources.

‘Transport system’ - means transport infrastructure (such as footpaths, cycle paths, roads and rail as well as the many other structures and systems that support them including digital infrastructure) and transport services (such as bus and rail, taxis, aviation and maritime transport). The wider system encompasses commercial and third sector transport providers. It also includes governance – the legislation, regulation and policies that govern transport.

The Strategy sets out three priorities: -

Priority 1

- **Bring services to people to reduce the need to travel.**

We will plan for better physical and digital connectivity, more local services, more home and remote working and more active travel, to reduce the need for people to use their cars daily.

Priority 2

- **Allow people and goods to move easily from door to door by accessible, sustainable and efficient transport services and infrastructure.**

We will actively aim to achieve a shift away from private car use to more sustainable transport modes for most journeys.

We will invest in low-carbon, accessible, efficient and sustainable transport services and infrastructure that enable more people to walk, cycle and use public transport, and low-emissions vehicles.

Infrastructure - We will provide safe, accessible, well-maintained and managed transport infrastructure.

We will also future proof it to adapt to climate change and facilitate more sustainable transport choices.

Where we need new transport infrastructure, we will use the Sustainable Transport Hierarchy to guide decisions.

We will continue to make best use of existing transport infrastructure by maintaining and managing it well.

We will also adapt it to a changing climate and upgrade it to support modal shift.

Where we need new infrastructure, we will use the: -

Sustainable Transport Hierarchy

- Walking and Cycling
- Public Transport
- Ultra-Low Emissions Vehicles
- Other Private Motor Vehicles

Priority 3

- **Encourage people to make the change to more sustainable transport.**

We will encourage people to change their travel behaviour to use low-carbon, sustainable transport.

We will do this by making sustainable transport more attractive and more affordable, and by adopting innovations that make it easier to use.

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Wellbeing and Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act is about improving the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of Wales.

It will make the public bodies listed in the act think more about the long term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach.

This will help us to create a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future.

To make sure we are all working towards the same vision, the act puts in place 7 well-being goals.

Well-being goals

- **A prosperous Wales**
- **A resilient Wales**
- **A healthier Wales**
- **A more equal Wales**
- **A Wales of cohesive communities**
- **A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language**
- **A globally responsible Wales**



Why do we need this law?

Wales faces a number of challenges now and in the future, such as climate change, poverty, health inequalities, jobs, and growth. To tackle these, we need to work together. To give current and future generations a good quality of life we need to think about the long-term impact of the decisions we make. This law will make sure that our public sector does this.

How does it work?

Sustainable development

Sustainable development is about improving the way that we can achieve our economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being. The act starts by giving a definition of what we mean by sustainable development.

In this Act “sustainable development” means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by acting, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the well-being goals.

Part 2 ‘improving well-being’ section 2 ‘sustainable development’.

For Wales to be sustainable it is important that we improve all 4 aspects of our well-being. Each is as important as the others.

Well-being duty

The act places a duty that the public bodies will be expected to conduct. A duty means they must do this by law. The well-being duty states:

Each public body must conduct sustainable development.

The action a public body takes in conducting sustainable development must include:

1. setting and publishing objectives (“well-being objectives”) that are designed to maximise its contribution to achieving each of the well-being goals, and
2. taking all reasonable steps (in exercising its functions) to meet those objectives.

Part 2 ‘Improving Well-being section 3 ‘well-being duty on public bodies’ paragraphs (1) and (2).

This means that each public body listed in the act must work to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. To do this they must set and publish well-being objectives.

These objectives will show how each public body will work to achieve the vision for Wales set out in the well-being goals. Public bodies must then take action to make sure they meet the objectives they set.

Which public bodies does the act include?

- Welsh Ministers
- **Local authorities**
- Local health boards
 - Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
 - Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board
 - Cardiff & Vale University Health Board
 - Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board
 - Hywel Dda University Health Board
 - Powys Teaching Health Board
 - Swansea Bay University Health Board
- Public Health Wales NHS Trust
- Velindre NHS Trust
- National Park Authorities
 - Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority
 - Snowdonia National Park Authority
 - Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
- Fire and rescue authorities
 - North Wales Fire and Rescue Service
 - South Wales Fire and Rescue Service
 - Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service
- Natural Resources Wales

- The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
- The Arts Council of Wales
- Sports Council of Wales
- National Library of Wales
- National Museum of Wales.

Well-being goals

The 7 well-being goals ('the goals') show the kind of Wales we want to see. Together they provide a shared vision for the public bodies listed in the act to work towards.

They are a set of goals; the act makes it clear the listed public bodies must work to achieve all the goals, not just one or two.

1. A prosperous Wales

An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.

2. A resilient Wales

A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example, climate change).

3. A healthier Wales

A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.

4. A More Equal Wales

A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic background and circumstances).

5. A Wales of cohesive communities

Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities.

6. A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.

7. A globally responsible Wales

A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being.

Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and Biodiversity Duty

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (the Act) introduced an enhanced biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty (the section 6 or s6 duty) for public authorities (PAs) in the exercise of functions in relation to Wales.

The s6 duty requires that public authorities 'must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity as far as consistent with the proper exercise of their functions and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems'. To comply with the S6 duty, public authorities should embed the consideration of biodiversity and ecosystems into their early thinking and business planning, including any policies, plans, programmes, and projects, as well as their day-to-day activities.

Under section 6(7) of the Act all public authorities must, before the end of 2019 and before the end of every third year after 2019, publish a report on what they have done to comply with the s6 duty. Given the Mid Wales CJC has only been in existence since early 2022 the duty is yet to be fulfilled.

The Mid Wales CJC has not attempted to set out a detailed plan in this first iteration of our Corporate Plan, given that detailed work is yet to commence in the areas of economy, transport, and strategic development planning.

The opportunity, however, has been taken to set out our commitment to the Duty and our intent to fulfil all its requirements as detailed work is undertaken.

Mid Wales Commitment to Biodiversity

'The Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee is committed to fulfilling all duties contained within the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and more specifically the Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty as work progresses with the areas of Economy, Transport and Strategic Planning Development.

These areas of work are currently at an early stage and any attempt to fulfil these requirements at the current time would lack sufficient detail to meet the duty in any meaningful way.

'Our commitment extends to ensuring that we will make a significant, material and beneficial difference to the environment and biodiversity for the region.'

Governance Administration and Resources

The Corporate Joint Committee is established under statutory Welsh Government legislation and as such it is important that the governance arrangements reflect these legislative requirements. In addition, these requirements need to be proportionate, transparent, and accessible.

This section of the Plan sets out the administrative arrangements that have been put in place to ensure appropriate governance and administration of the CJC for Mid Wales. The adoption of these arrangements is reported through a democratic process reflecting long established good practice for decision making and public transparency.

Background

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (“the LGE Act”) created the framework for a consistent mechanism for regional collaboration between local authorities through Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs). The LGE Act provides for the establishment of CJCs through Regulations (CJC Establishment Regulations).

The CJC will exercise functions in three areas namely strategic development planning, regional transport planning and the promotion of the economic well-being of their areas. In contrast to other joint committee arrangements, CJCs are separate corporate bodies which can employ staff, hold assets and budgets, and undertake functions.

The Mid Wales CJC will comprise of the Leaders of Powys County Council and Ceredigion County Council (“the Constituent Councils”) and in the preparation of the Strategic Development Plan, the CJC will include a representative of the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park.

The CJC has prescribed functions related to the preparation of the Regional Transport Plan, Strategic Development Plan, and the exercise of Economic Wellbeing powers. These are set out specifically as follows:

- (a) **Economic well-being** (section 76 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021)
- (b) **Transport policies** (section 108(1)(a) and (2)(a) of Part 2 of the Transport Act 2000)
- (c) **Strategic development plan**

The CJC should be treated as a member of the ‘local government family’ and, where appropriate, should be subject to the same powers and duties as local authorities in the way that they operate. This includes the Sustainable Development and Well-being Duty under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (“the WFG Act”), the Environment Act 1995 and the duty to prepare and publish a strategy for

contributing to the eradication of child poverty in Wales under the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010.

CJCs are required to appoint a number of statutory “executive officers” like the roles within principal councils (e.g., Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer).

The current postholders as agreed by the CJC on the are: -

Chief Executive – (This role will be rotated annually between the two constituent Councils)

Chief Finance Officer – Ceredigion Council lead authority

Monitoring Officer – Powys County Council lead authority

CJCs can directly employ such officers but it is also possible for staff to be loaned from a Constituent Council to fulfil these roles as the CJC may determine. It is also intended that all executive roles within a CJC will be afforded the same statutory protection and indemnity as statutory officers within principal councils.

An agreement will be entered into between the CJC and the authorities for staff to be made available to the CJC and will be acting as CJC staff when conducting functions for the CJC. The members of staff that are affected will be consulted to ensure to seek their agreement to these additional obligations.

Support Services

The support services provided will be on an ad-hoc basis as and when support is required and will be conducted by staff within their normal contracted hours with their Constituent Councils, and Chief Executives of each Authority will keep such matters under review to address workload pressures.

Standing Orders

Standing Orders have been agreed at the meeting of the CJC on the 25th January 2022 and are attached as Appendix.

Constitution

A Constitution has also been agreed by the CJC on the 25th of January 2022 and is attached as Appendix.

There are already 3 sets of governance Regulations in force. In addition to the establishing of regulations, there are 2 sets of General Regulations with a third anticipated to come into force in the Spring of 2023. It is likely that there will be a further set.

It can be appreciated therefore that establishing the governance arrangements for the CJC has to respond and develop against a legal situation which is still evolving. Some aspects such as Overview and Scrutiny has just been the subject of consultation. Similarly, the arrangements for the Code of Conduct and Standards Committee are to be confirmed. These are in italics in the Standing Orders on the assumption that the arrangements will reflect the consultation, but this has not been confirmed.

The members of the CJC are:

(a) the executive leaders of a. Powys County Council b. Ceredigion County Council

(b) A member of the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority

The CJC members are entitled to vote in relation to any matter to be decided by the CJC, except that the Bannau Brycheiniog member may only vote where the matter to be decided is about strategic planning functions (and associated issues), unless the Council members agree to extend the NPA to include other functions.

To implement the legislative requirements, it is proposed that the CJC will have three Sub Committees, with the chair and vice chair of each Sub-Committee being drawn from the respective Cabinets of the Constituent Councils (or their nominated deputies) and shared between the two authorities for a 12-month period. It is proposed that the following sub-committees be established: -

- Regional Transport Planning Sub Committee
- Economic Well Being – Regional Economic Development (Mid Wales Growth Deal Sub Committee)
- Strategic Development Planning Sub Committee – Chair Councillor Jake Berriman

The CJC is required to establish a sub-committee to be known as the Governance and Audit Sub-Committee with the terms of reference being approved by the CJC before 1st June 2022.

The CJC will appoint a Standards Committee in accordance with the terms of reference adopted by the CJC at its meeting on and are attached as Appendix.

Collaborating with its Constituent Councils and the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority the Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee (“CJC”) will be required to put in place appropriate overview and scrutiny arrangements. Scrutiny will be an important part of the democratic accountability of the CJC. It will be important for CJC’s to consult on and agree the arrangements with its constituent councils.

In considering the most effective and efficient approach to scrutiny, Welsh Government require Constituent Councils and CJC’s to give thought to the benefits of a joint overview and scrutiny committee made up of the constituent councils together with the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority in respect of Strategic Development Planning matters. The clear aim and ambition however must be to

create, facilitate and encourage a clear democratic link back to the constituent councils.

Future reports will be brought back to the CJC to appoint representatives to this Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee Budget

The CJC met in January 2022 to establish its budget for the 2022/2023 financial year.

Financial Impacts

The financial impacts of adopting this Constitution and associated documents will be incorporated into the budget for 2022/2023 and future reports to the CJC.

Equality Act

The CJC is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socioeconomic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socioeconomic disadvantage.
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language.
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- As part of the Equality Act the region will meet its statutory duty by adopting existing Strategic Equality Plans (SEP's) that form part of each lead authorities own Corporate Plans.

Sustainable Development

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must conduct sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by acting, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals.

Although an Integrated Impact Assessment will be required as the work of the CJC develops this has not been undertaken to date. It is, however, an integral part of this Corporate Plan and the Integrated Assessment is attached as Appendix.

Workforce Impacts

Part 5 of the LGE Act provides for the establishment, through regulations, of CJsCs and compliance will be had with this and other legislative obligations in the establishment of CJsCs. In particular, the Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee Regulations came into force on 1st April 2021 and set out an initial framework for example, that the CJC should be established and the time limits for the discharging of specific functions. However, a series of further Regulations are being drafted and consulted on by Welsh Government. The Welsh Government has concluded its consultation on the Corporate Joint Committees (General) (No.2) (Wales) Regulations 2021. The Welsh Government is also currently consulting on draft statutory guidance.

Risk Management Impacts

Failure to constitute the CJC means the CJC will be unable to take any decisions, including setting a budget and accordingly would be in breach of the legal requirements imposed under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (exposing each constituent council and national park authority to challenge) along with the reputational risks that such non-compliance will bring. Consultation:

Resources

Although Welsh Government have provided funding for the setting up of the Mid Wales Corporate Joint Committee, it is a requirement that the local authority member organisations fund an annual budget to resource ongoing work.

Budget 2023/24

The Budget for 2023/24 is included within Appendix A. The budget proposed totals £175,000 consisting of £131,255 for the General Budget and £43,745 for the Strategic Planning Budget. Powys County Council and Ceredigion County Council will fund the budget equally. The basis for funding the MWCJC budget will be reviewed and agreed annually.

The Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority fund 11.45% (per national park population projections – 2018 based – published May 2021) of the Strategic Planning Budget. The 2023/24 Budget remains predicated on limited expenditure being incurred. This is in part due to number of matters needing resolution with Welsh Government. There are also key areas where further clarification is required before financial implications and timelines can be fully understood e.g., Welsh Government Regional Transport guidance. In addition, at this stage no formal decision has been made regarding the Growing Mid Wales Joint Committee, which currently sits outside of the MWCJC.

Therefore, as several factors become clearer, there may need to be a formal revision of the 23/24 MWCJC budget.

Other Financial Matters

- A. Surpluses that accrue in any year will be contained and Strategic Planning and General Budgets identified separately) within the MWCJC reserve account and will be used for future expenditure.
- B. All costs incurred and charged to MWCJC (being a separate legal entity) will need to be appropriately evidenced. This is to ensure value for money relative to the level of activity, outputs and number of MWCJC meetings taking place.
- C. Audit Wales will also at the right time formally need to certify the year end outturn position for 2022/23. When MWCJC expenditure falls under £2.5m in any given year, then this is via an annual return. It is worth noting that beyond this threshold a fuller Statement of Accounts would be required, which would be a step up in terms of resources required.
- D. The MWCJC does not have any liabilities outstanding in respect of any earlier financial year as a result it is not currently recommended that an amount is approved to be held for this purpose.
- E. Budgets for the MWCJC will be reviewed on an annual basis to reflect the growing work programme and to ensure the resourcing of specific work areas.

Equalities – Integrated Impact Assessment and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

Councils within the region have already identified the importance of equalities as part of their own Corporate Plans. This drive to improve equality of opportunity is therefore shared across the region and is a core principle to this corporate plan and the joint way of working.

The statutory regulation that embeds the need to address inequalities is contained within the Equality Act 2010. More specifically CJC's are listed in the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and are clearly a duty that local authorities, and in this case CJC's, must embrace. This duty is regulated by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

The use of Integrated Impact Assessments (IIA's) is now customary practice for public sector organisations and helps to assess how their plans may impact on disadvantaged, deprived and vulnerable groups and individuals. It is also important that initiative-taking steps are taken to improve the life chances of such groups and individuals, and in doing so there needs to be an aspirational approach to address inequality that goes beyond any statutory requirements. The Mid Wales Region will adopt an Integrated Impact Assessment process that ensures statutory compliance but has also set out an overriding equality statement which will guide a number of equality objectives that form part of this plan.

Rather than create a new IIA process for the region it has been decided to adopt the format used by Powys County Council. This process has been developed over many years and has proved effective in assessing compliance with national guidance.

In addition, the Mid Wales CJC is legally required to produce a Strategic Equality Plan (SEP). Both lead authorities have already met this duty by ensuring that the individual Council Corporate Plans include SEP's for their own areas. It has been agreed with the Equality and Human Rights Commission that the inclusion of these existing plans as a part of this Corporate Strategy, will meet compliance with the obligations under the Equality Act and, in particular, the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). An Overview and Scrutiny Sub Committee will be appointed to monitor progress of the CJC in this, and all other areas, as described in the governance section of this plan.

Powys County Council Impact Assessment (AI)

The work undertaken in relation to the areas of Economy, Transport and Strategic Planning will have potential impacts on our communities in respect of equalities. It is essential that at each stage of the process we undertake ongoing impact assessments as to how this work will impact on our communities. We are therefore confident that as each area of work will need to undertake its own detailed Integrated Impact Assessment we will meet and exceed out statutory duty.

As an overarching guiding principle, we have set out our vision, together with our objectives, that will be used ensure equalities are at the forefront of our work.

Vision for the Mid Wales Regional Corporate Joint Committee - Equalities

'The Mid Wales Region will prioritise work to improve opportunities for those who experience inequality and socio-economic disadvantage at the heart of what we do.'

Objectives

1. We will work to improve opportunities that residents in the region have access to well paid jobs including those who are socio-economically disadvantaged.
2. We will work to create an integrated transport system that improves opportunities to access work and recreation including those who are disadvantaged through inequality.
3. We will work to ensure that regional planning development policy and guidance provides improved opportunities for disadvantaged groups and individuals.

Measurement and Assessment

We will use the Integrated Impact Assessment process as set out by Welsh Government to measure how we are progressing with the equality objectives set out above. This assessment will be undertaken in tandem with the IIA we will undertake for the wellbeing objectives that are also set out in this plan.

Sustainability

Sustainability is at the heart of what public sector organisations need to do to ensure future generations can live their lives in a healthy and fulfilling way. In a more concise way, sustainability means that we must strive to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainability is defined by Welsh Government as a process of improving the economic, social, environmental, and cultural well-being of Wales.

The Welsh Governments Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 introduced the sustainable development principles in the 5 Ways of Working that all public bodies must adopt. It is a duty that is placed on public sector bodies across Wales. Councils within the region have already adopted these principles in their own Corporate Plans and will continue to adopt an approach throughout this plan that reflects the principles both in the way they are delivered and measured.

Given the more strategic nature of the work of CJC's it is likely that the impact of our work will be spread over a longer period. It is important that we monitor closely how the development of plans, and the delivery of investment decisions, impacts on the sustainability of our communities for the long term.

Five Ways of Working Principles

1. Long term

The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.

2. Prevention

How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.

3. Integration

Considering how the public body's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.

4. Collaboration

Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives.

5. Involvement

The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.

Performance Management and Quality Assurance

Measuring progress with our plans is critical if we are to demonstrate commitment and accountability for actions identified.

To this end we will use the Powys County Council Performance Management and Quality Assurance Framework to assess how well the CJC is delivering on the plan. The principles of Plan–Do–Review, which are the basis for the Framework will be used to make sure progress is assessed, monitored and transparent.

The region also has a duty to meet a range of Welsh Government legislative requirements that have already been set out in this document. For example, meeting our Wellbeing Objectives will be key to demonstrating that the CJC is meeting its commitment to the Act.

Annual Report

The Corporate Joint Committee will produce an annual report that sets out our achievements in terms of how progress has been made in the areas of Economy, Transport and Strategic Planning. In addition, this annual report will set out how we have met our legislative requirements to Welsh Government.

Scrutiny and Audit

The CJC will be scrutinised and audited in accordance with the constitution which is attached as appendix. The work of the oversight sub committees will be partly governed by the statutory guidance contained within a range of Welsh Government strategies and policies.

The following paragraphs set out the purpose and role of both the Governance and Audit Sub Committee, and the Overview and Scrutiny Sub Committee.

The Corporate Joint Committee, as set out in the constitution, will be scrutinised by both the Overview and Scrutiny Sub Committee, and the Governance and Audit Sub Committee.

Governance and Audit Sub-Committee

The CJC will establish a sub-committee (known as the Governance and Audit Sub-Committee) to:

- a. Review and scrutinise the CJC's financial affairs.
- b. Make reports and recommendations in relation to the CJC's financial affairs.
- c. Review and assess the risk management, internal control, and corporate governance arrangements of the CJC.
- d. Make reports and recommendations to the CJC on the adequacy and effectiveness of those arrangements.
- e. Oversee the CJC's internal and external audit arrangements.
- f. Review any financial statements prepared by the CJC.
- g. Exercise such other functions as the CJC may specify.

Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee

The CJC will appoint an Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee in accordance with the terms of reference adopted by the CJC. The purpose of the Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committee shall be:

Performing the overview and scrutiny function for the CJC on behalf of the Constituent Councils and the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority where appropriate to:

- (a) review and or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any of the CJC's functions.

(b) make reports or recommendations to the CJC or its executive officers with respect to the discharge of any of those functions.

(c) exercise such other functions as the CJC may determine.

(d) To develop a Forward Work Programme annually, reflecting the functions described.

(e) To seek reassurance and consider if the CJC is developing according to guidance from WG.

DRAFT