



REPORT TO THE GROWING MID WALES BOARD

21 June 2022

TITLE:	Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership – Progress Update
AUTHOR:	Aggie Caesar-Homden, RSP Manager. Aggie.caesar-homden@powys.gov.uk

1. Purpose of the Report.

- 1.1. To provide Members of the Growing Mid Wales Joint Committee with an update on progress of the Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership.

2. Decision Sought.

- 2.1. Note progress to date.
- 2.2. To nominate two Growing Mid Wales Board Cabinet Member representatives, one from each Local Authority to sit on the Regional Skills Partnership Board.

3. Introduction.

- 3.1. Since the last report, the Regional Skills Partnership continues to make good progress working with business leaders and stakeholders across the region to understand the skills provision and labour market needs, in order to drive investment that meets the requirements of both employers and workforce.
- 3.2. The RSP Board has been focused on the key areas of work required, in order to provide a clear programme of work to pursue, including the key areas of structure, needs identification, partnership building and future planning. The RSP Manager continues to work closely with our respective Chief Regional Officers and regional stakeholders to support Regional Economic Frameworks, WG priorities and continue to build awareness of cross-border issues.

4. Green Skills Report.

- 4.1. Data Cymru worked with the four RSP Managers to develop a Green Skills Report that has been shared with WG for consideration.
- 4.2. The report was launched on Friday 23 March 2022.
- 4.3. The report will form the baseline for further deep dive work into the sector for the new 3-year Employability and Skills Plan 2022 – 2025.

5. Covid – 19 Reporting.

- 5.1. At the time of drafting this report, the final Covid-19 report was being prepared for submission to Welsh Government.
- 5.2. Unlike the previous reports submitted, this final report will act as a summary of findings over the pandemic and shed light on how the employment and skills landscape of the region has been changed by the pandemic.

6. RSP Grant Award Report Submission.

- 6.1. The RSP submitted the quarterly Grant Award Activity Report to WG which has been approved.

7. Young Persons Guarantee.

- 7.1. The Programme for Government (PfG) sets out an ambitious commitment to deliver the Young Persons Guarantee, giving everyone under 25 the offer of support into work, education, training, or self-employment.
- 7.2. The guarantee was set to ensure no lost generation across Wales due to the predicted economic downturn and the huge rise in unemployment as a result of Covid and Brexit.
- 7.3. Since the PfG was published, the job market has recovered far more rapidly than predicted and seems to be buoyant with demand in some areas outweighing supply. However, the YPG still has an important role to play in supporting Welsh Government reach its policy goal of becoming a fairer, greener, and more successful Wales. The YPG also needs to continue to focus on:
 - Assisting young people into more sustainable job roles;
 - Progression for young people within these jobs and whether we now face a generation of under-employment;
 - Planning for a possible second wave of unemployment over the next few months; and
 - The lack of skills or skills mismatch within the labour market.
- 7.4. Summary of the outcomes and measures:
 - One desktop report per region by Spring 2022 submitted to Welsh Government;
 - Two events per region involving programmes and projects;
 - Work with Working Wales and provide an update report to ensure that all the information is added to the support finder and local support finder;
 - Local support finder directory and guidance pack produced for advisors locally to ensure that information and awareness of projects and programmes are available;
 - An action plan in relation to any strategic barriers identified during the research work.
- 7.5. Following a successful Quick Quote exercise, Hatch Associates have been commissioned to provide technical support for this piece of work.
- 7.6. A mapping exercise of current provision has been undertaken. Hatch are currently holding 1:1 meetings with providers and will conduct workshops with partners to understand barriers to provision and progression as part of the desktop research report and Action Plan.

7.7. A progress update will be provided by Hatch to the RSP Board at the next meeting on 8 June 2022.

7.8. WG have verbally confirmed that there will be further work needed in this policy area. Additional information will be provided in due course.

8. Board Membership and Establishment of Cluster Groups.

8.1. As previously agreed by the GMW Board, the RSP Chair and RSP Manager have reviewed current RSP Board membership and the establishment of a number of cluster groups.

8.2. Following this review, initial cluster groups have been established:

- Training Providers
- Businesses
- Public Services

8.3. In addition to these cluster groups Policy Task and Finish Groups will also be established for specific areas of WG Policy work.

8.4. It has been agreed that RSP Board meetings will be held quarterly from July 2022, in line with Welsh government requirements.

8.5. It has been agreed that the RSP Board Annual Meeting will be held on 11th July 2022 to allow the new Administrations to settle in and for Elected Members to fully understand the importance of the RSP Board's responsibilities across the region and the purpose of the Chair's role.

9. Forward Work Programme

9.1. 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. Initial discussions have been undertaken with RSP Managers and WG in relation to key deliverables for the next twelve months and beyond contained in the draft Guidance Note.

9.3. The content will be refreshed on a six-monthly basis and reissued to RSPs to reflect any changes to policy direction and progress against key milestones. Also, given the turbulent economic times we are living in, with war in eastern Europe, legacy Brexit issues and an ongoing pandemic, WG may need to refocus at short notice to needs arising from unexpected change.

9.4. The final Official Guidance Note has been received. Grant Award Letters have not been received at the time of drafting this report.

9.5. Relevant policy leads from across Welsh Government will work closely with RSPs to provide additional context and provide updates from their areas.

9.6. It is also recognised that some areas will require updates to reflect progress. Not every area will progress at the same speed.

9.7. WG will need to retain the ability to commission new work, "in year."

9.8. Key deliverables will be required for each of the below areas:

- Employment and Skills plans 2022-25
- Digital skills
- Net Zero skills
- National Occupational Standards (NOS)
- Further Education and Apprenticeships
- Welsh Language

10. Employment and Skills Plan.

- 10.1. RSPs will be asked to provide a 3-year Employment and Skills Action Plan (2022 – 2025) which will identify priorities for regional investment that supports jobs and growth in the Mid Wales region.
- 10.2. Initial discussions with Senior Civil Servants have indicated that the plan will be supplemented by a number of annexes which will focus on different policy areas that feature in the Programme for Government.
- 10.3. Additional focus should be given to Net Zero, Welsh Language, Digital Skills, National Occupational Standards, Further Education and Apprenticeships.
- 10.4. A template will be provided by WG to ensure consistency across all four regions.

11. Digital Skills.

- 11.1. RSPs will work with employers and stakeholders to collate labour market intelligence which will help inform decision making centred around digital skills.
- 11.2. There is also a key role to track the impact of change around digital skills, across the regions of Wales over the coming years.
- 11.3. Digital skills are commonly highlighted as a priority across areas of government policy and delivery and RSPs have a clear role to play to help deliver in relation to employability and skills. Specifically, digital skills is referenced as an overarching 'Mission' within the Digital Strategy for Wales. "Mission Three" sets out the ambition of how we will "Create a workforce that has the digital skills, capability and confidence to excel in the workplace and in everyday life."
- 11.4. There are challenges that RSPs can help WG overcome such as establishing new digital skills provision, such as adding vendor qualifications within Personal Learning Accounts (PLAs), and ensure digital skills are mainstreamed and hardwired across post-16 provision, working with key stakeholders.
- 11.5. Aligned to the Digital Strategy for Wales, Professor Phil Brown published his final report into the impact of digital innovation on the economy and the future of work in Wales in September 2019. He spoke of Wales facing a "race against time", with the pace and scale of digital innovation having the potential to overtake our ability as a nation to respond. His report provided an evaluation of the realities and trends that will shape the future of work in Wales and the underlying drivers of the Welsh economy in the context of the fourth industrial revolution.
- 11.6. WG will be recruiting a senior manager to the Skills Policy Team to progress the recommendations of the Brown Review and the skills content of Digital Wales.

12. Net Zero.

- 12.1. RSPs have been commissioned by Welsh Government to specifically collate labour market intelligence from employers, to provide an evidence base which will help inform decision making focused on enabling change, to meet the goal of a Net Zero Wales by 2050. This will be a key part of the new employment and skills plans covering 2022-25, which will be submitted to Welsh Government in August 2022.
- 12.2. Moving to Net Zero presents the opportunity to create well a paid, skilled Welsh workforce, supported by key Net Zero aligned apprenticeships as a pathway. More broadly, the Net Zero evidence base can help the whole skills supply side, from schools to higher education, adapt provision to meet industry and societal needs.
- 12.3. Identifying key regional sectors of the economy that will impacted by the transition to Net Zero will be vitally important. There will be a need to identify specific occupations that are or will be undergoing change and an analysis of how the Welsh workforce undergoing that change will have to adapt, develop new skillsets or re-adapt their skills. There may also be cross-border implications acknowledging devolution and different skills systems between England and Wales.
- 12.4. The challenge to deliver the Net Zero Wales commitment does not solely rest with Welsh Government. RSPs act as strategic partnerships representing their regions and stakeholders and everyone must work together to develop and drive forward skills and employability-based solutions.

13. National occupational standards (NOS). Occupational trends/challenges.

- 13.1. NOS are set at the level of occupation and act as a common currency to enable the acquisition of transferable skills, which support movement within a flexible labour market across sectors and geographies.
- 13.2. The RSPs have an important role to play in ensuring that NOS remain up-to-date and meet the needs of employers and sectors in the region.
- 13.3. RSPs are asked to gather intelligence and reference priority occupations in the region, emerging and growth occupations which require particular skills / new qualifications, occupations facing potential changes to working practices, technological changes and / or new regulations or legislative requirements e.g. Health and Safety, and occupations that are in decline.
- 13.4. RSPs are asked to classify occupations at the level of Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes to allow funding/resources to be directed to specific gap areas.

14. Further Education and Apprenticeships.

- 14.1. RSPs are asked to identify regional and / or sub regional priorities for Further Education delivery and provide supporting context and a clear rationale, drawing from employer led sources.
- 14.2. RSPs are expected to ensure there is a robust evidence base, which could include for example, sectors impacted by Brexit or Covid or the need to attract talent and specific skill sets into the region due to a planned or existing inward investment project.

14.3. WG expect no more than five priorities to be identified, per region.

14.4. Apprenticeships – as above but to focus on priorities that the provider network should respond to for the year 2023-24.

15. Welsh Language.

15.1. The Welsh Government’s strategy Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers aims to create more Welsh speakers and increase the use of the Welsh language on a day-to-day basis.

15.2. RSPs are required to include a detailed section on Welsh language skills within their three-year employment and skills plan 2022-25.

15.3. RSPs need to work closely with/utilise expertise available within relevant organisations across Wales that provide support and local intelligence on Welsh language skill requirements.

16. In the pipeline - additional areas that WG may commission over the next 18 months.

- An analysis of the skills needs of the Social Care Sector
- Creative Sector skills needs and the need for RSPs to work closely with Creative Wales.

17. RSP Board Membership – GMW Board Nominations for Decision

17.1. In line with the Terms of Reference for the Regional Skills Partnership, the Growing Mid Wales Board has a position on the RSP Board.

17.2. At the meeting of the Growing Mid Wales Board on 15th November 2021 the GMW Board nominated two Elected Members to the RSP Board, one from each of the two Local Authorities.

17.3. Following on from the May elections, the two previous nominated members are no longer members of the GMW Board.

17.4. Consideration is sought to nominate two Cabinet Member representatives to sit on the RSP Board.

17.5. Current Membership of the RSP is detailed in the table below (as set out in IAA3):

Membership of the RSP	
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 Council
2 x Strategic Workforce Planning leads	One officer from each Council
2 x Regeneration Representatives	One officer from each Council
2 x Health Representatives	One representative from each of the Health Boards (Powys Teaching Health Board and Hywel Dda Health Board)

AGENDA ITEM 6.1
GROWING MID WALES JOINT COMMITTEE
21/06/2022

Training providers	National Training Federation for Wales + WBL providers from each LA
<p>Industry / Employers</p> <p>The Strategic Growth Priorities for Growing Mid Wales are</p> <p>Agriculture, Food & Drink</p> <p>Transport</p> <p>Supporting Enterprise</p> <p>Skills & Employment</p> <p>Energy</p> <p>Strengthened Tourism Offer</p> <p>Applied Research & Innovation</p> <p>Digital</p> <p>These areas should all be covered by the representation that is proposed for the RSP.</p>	<p>A representative each from the sectors derived from those identified in AECOM Report:</p> <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) <p>*This “sector” is particularly significant in its relative scale in the Mid Wales Region 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)</p>
Economic Advisory Group Mid Wales	Representative to be nominated
Growing Mid Wales Board	One Representative to be nominated by each Council
Careers Wales	One Representative
Job Centre Plus / DWP	One Representative
RSP Manager	One Representative
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.

Decision Required

To nominate two Growing Mid Wales Board Cabinet Members representatives, one from each Local Authority to sit on the Regional Skills Partnership Board.

18. Legal Implications

18.1. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

19. Human Resources Implications

19.1. There are no HR implications arising from this report.

20. Financial Implications

20.1. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

21. Appendices

21.1. None