



# **Partneriaeth Tyfu Canolbarth Cymru / Growing Mid Wales Partnership**

**Dydd Mawrth 5 Gorffennaf 2022**

**Tuesday 5 July 2022**

2.00 pm

Cyfarfod Rhith

Virtual Meeting

## **In Attendance**

Councillor James Gibson-Watt, Leader of Powys County Council **(Chair) (CIlr JG-W)**

Aggie Caesar-Homden, Growing Mid Wales **(ACH)**

Andrew Cornish, Coleg Ceredigion **(AC)**

Angharad Massow, Growing Mid Wales **(AM)**

Ann Elias, Ceredigion County Council **(AE)**

Arwyn Davies, Ceredigion County Council **(AD)**

Arwyn Watkins OBE, Cambrian Training **(ArW)**

Barbara Green, Growing Mid Wales **(BG)**

Carwyn Jones-Evans, Ceredigion County Council **(CJE)**

Catherine Mealing-Jones, Brecon Beacons National Park **(CM-J)**

Cathy Martin, Growing Mid Wales **(CMn)**

Ceri Stephens, Mid Wales Manufacturing Group **(CS)**

Claire Miles, Growing Mid Wales **(CMs)**

Councillor Bryan Davies, Leader, Ceredigion County Council **(CIlr BD)**

Councillor Clive Davies, Ceredigion County Council **(CIlr CD)**

Councillor Dafydd Meurig, Gwynedd County Council **(CIlr DM)**

Councillor Keith Henson, Ceredigion County Council **(CIlr KH)**

David Madge, Cwmpas **(DM)**

David Owen, Growing Mid Wales **(DO)**

Eifion Evans, Ceredigion County Council **(EE)**

Gareth Marston, Growing Mid Wales **(GM)**

Gavin Bown, Natural Resources Wales **(GB)**

Hywel Davies, University of Wales Trinity St David **(HD)**

Mark Dacey, NPTC Group of Colleges **(MD)**

Nia Williams, Mid Wales Joint Committee **(NiaW)**

Nick Venti, PAVO **(NV)**

Nicola Williams, Powys County Council **(NW)**

Nigel Brinn, Powys County Council **(NB)**

Peter Davies, Farmers' Union of Wales **(PD)**

Peter Howells, NFU Cymru **(PH)**

Peter James, Welsh Government **(PJ)**

Rebecca Jeremy, Powys County Council **(RJ)**

Rebecca Rees, Visit Wales **(RR)**

Rhian Heywood, Aber Innovation **(RH)**

Steve Hughson, Royal Welsh Agricultural Society **(SH)**

Thomas Yeo, Growing Mid Wales **(TY)**

Val Hawkins, Mid Wales Tourism **(VH)**

Vanessa Cashmore, Coleg Ceredigion **(VC)**

Simultaneous Translation of this meeting was provided by Sian Jones from Cyfaith.

The Chair, Cllr James Gibson-Watt, Leader, PCC welcomed everyone to the meeting and led the introductions to those present.

<p><b>1.</b></p>	<p><b>Apologies for absence</b>  Apologies for absence were received from:-  Ann Watkin, Welsh Government <b>(AW)</b>  Councillor David Selby, Powys County Council <b>(DS)</b>  Councillor Jackie Charlton, Powys County Council <b>(JC)</b>  Julie Lewis, Powys County Council <b>(JL)</b>  Lowri Gwilym, WLGA <b>(LG)</b>  Peter Skitt, Hywel Dda Healthboard, NHS <b>(PS)</b>  Rhodri Morgan, Aberystwyth University <b>(RM)</b></p>
<p><b>2.</b></p>	<p><b>Minutes</b>  The minutes of the last meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2022 were agreed as a correct record. Proposed by Eifion Evans and seconded by Peter Davies.</p>
<p><b>3.</b></p>	<p><b>Mid Wales Growth Deal – Progress Update</b>  Cathy Martin gave a verbal update to the meeting.</p> <p><b>Recruitment</b>  The Team has a number of new members. Tom Yeo has joined as the Energy Lead, Angharad Massow has joined as Communications Officer and a Programme Manager has been recruited for the Sites &amp; Premises Programme who is due to start on 8<sup>th</sup> August.</p> <p>TY has been working with Welsh Government to agree funding to support a new Energy Officer role which would provide support to both Ceredigion &amp; Powys on the Local Area Action Plans, but will sit within Growing Mid Wales and the wider energy work that TY is undertaking.</p> <p>A Private Investment Strategy has been drafted. This has come from both Welsh &amp; UK Government and looks at how the principles and approach works to attract investment in the Growth Deal projects. The project sponsors will be seeking Growth Deal funding but will need to supply other sources of funding whether that is private or public sector. It is a high-level document and will develop over time in line with the Growth Deal. It is likely to be included in the wider Portfolio Business Case that has been drafted which will be reviewed on annual basis.</p> <p>At the beginning of the year, individuals were recruited to the Economic Advisory Group which is a private sector group that will provide support to the Growth Deal Business Case with advice and their knowledge of the private sector. They will also support the Private Investment Strategy and similar strategies that might be developed. Initial meeting was in March and a work programme has been developed.</p> <p><b>Growth Deal Portfolio</b>  There are currently two programmes within the Portfolio</p> <p><b>Digital Programme (managed by Dave Owen).</b>  This is a key part of the GMW Vision. In March, the GMW Board approved the establishment of a Digital Programme Board to lead on that activity and the development of a programme business case (this is currently in draft format). Three sessions have already been held and they are looking at potential projects that may come under that programme. The board is looking at the Growth Deal, but will also look at other funding opportunities throughout the region and ensure any work is in line with UK &amp; Welsh government policies</p>

**Sites & Premises Programme**

The Programme Manager will be starting in August and this is key to taking this programme forward as the resource has not been previously available. Some work has been undertaken to date and some reports have been commissioned but it is now possible to get into the details and options of potential sites and working on which ones are viable to take forward. Discussions have also been held with WG for funding support.

**Projects**

Several initial proposals for projects have been submitted for funding through the Growth Deal. This went through a short listing process in August 2021 and the projects are now being developed. For the Growth Deal, the assessments have to follow the 5 Case Business Model, it is complex, but allows the project sponsors to make sure they have covered all the detail to ensure they can provide solid business cases that will be successful in delivery. The current position is that the Strategic Outline Cases have been submitted and there are eight to be reviewed, one case missed the June deadline. An appraisal process is in place with an internal review team and that is just starting. The review team responses will be presented to the Management Group for review in August and then to the GMW Board in September.

**Questions**

Cllr BD thanked CMn for her presentation and acknowledged the work that has gone into the Growth Deal by Officers and the former Leaders. There is an element of risk with the resource costs increasing and can make a huge difference in project costs. In terms of timetable and when these projects will be implemented, what is the risk if the monies are not released by the UK government because of the timetable to bring these projects to fruition and will they lose out? CMn informed the meeting that the funding had been committed by the UK Government over 10 year period and the WG over a 15 year period. That is based on a flat profile divided up over the years. It will allow the projects to come forward on a slightly slower basis, but there is a need to look at funding if the project costs are coming in sooner. Rising costs are a concern, but projects are putting in a best estimate in their business cases. There are three stages – Strategic Outline Case, Outline Business Case and Full Business Case. Each project has to get through each stage before a final decision on whether the funding is granted or not. It is a long process but once at the final stage, they will have a much better understanding of the potential costs and risks at that time. There is no risk at the present time with the government funding as it has been committed and they are engaging with GMW to make the Growth Deal a success in the region. Work is currently looking how the projects can be supported in terms of the potential escalating costs. If the costs increase, it could mean that the funding is spread thinner across the projects and that will bring in the Private Investment Strategy and looking for alternative funding options for match funding.

Cllr BD accepted CMn's response. However, he questioned the priority of projects from each county and would projects in each county lose out if a timetable allowed for one to come forward sooner than the other? CMn replied that the initial assessments will be underway soon and the projects will progress to the next stage depending on them meeting all the criteria. If some projects drop out, there is then the potential for other projects to come forward across the region. The first step would be to review the initial list of projects and to see where they are at in their development and their potential to come forward. There is an opportunity to invite new projects if there is nothing in the initial list that is suitable to move to the next stage. There have been approaches in recent months and these sponsors have initially been directed to the LA economic development teams to look at the proposals and to see if they would suit the Growth Deal or other opportunities in the region bearing in mind the timings.

	<p>SH asked at what point does the opportunity for the subsequent tier applications close? Is this still the case or is that closed off due to the number of existing applications? CMn responded that there is a potential opportunity but this cannot be guaranteed. A Portfolio Business Case (PBC) was developed in October 2021 and was based on the initial proposals that came forward and subsequently the short list which is where the Portfolio is now. The Portfolio is flexible so something can drop out and be replaced by another project whether it is from the initial list or a new proposal. Each year the PBC will be reviewed in the Autumn. This is being done now during the Summer and the Autumn with information that is coming out of the SOC's that are being reviewed now. This will allow the PBC to be updated and possibly initiate a call.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p><b>Regional Learning &amp; Skills Partnership – Progress Update</b>  Aggie Caesar-Homden provided a verbal update to the meeting and reported that good progress is being made within the Partnership.</p> <p><b>Young Persons Guarantee</b>  A mapping exercise has been carried out and this information has been shared with Careers Wales and is being used by their advisors as a signposting tool. The draft report is expected imminently which will be reviewed and widely distributed to gather comments before going to the RSP Board.</p> <p><b>Forward Work Programme</b>  Initial discussions have been undertaken with RSP Managers and WG in relation to key deliverables contained in the draft Guidance Note for the next twelve months and beyond.</p> <p>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. Key deliverables will be the Employment and Skills plans 2022-25 which will cover Digital skills, Net Zero skills, National Occupational Standards (NOS), Further Education and Apprenticeships and Welsh Language. WG have committed to 125K apprenticeships and they are working with the RSP's to guide managers through the policies. There will be work done on the key economic priority areas as part of the E&amp;S Plan and the YPG will also feed into the E&amp;S plan.</p> <p>The Employment and Skills Annual Survey will be going out shortly. Questions have been included on numeracy and future skills needs and the areas noted above.</p> <p>The Chair asked for clarity on when these various reports will come out.</p> <p>Young Persons Guarantee draft report is expected within the week. Hatch Associates have been commissioned to do this work and it will be the first draft.</p> <p>E&amp;S Plan discussions are currently being held with WG as the initial timescales have been changed in the grant award letter. It is likely to be September/October and this will feed into FE &amp; curriculum plans for next year.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p><b>Business Updates</b>  <b>5.1 Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme</b>  Arwyn Davies provided a verbal update.  AD apologised for the title of this item which had not been picked up. It is now the Transforming Towns Scheme. Although this is a capital programme, work has been undertaken to create a strategy for the developments of these rural Mid Wales towns. A group has been put in place to develop these strategies and includes Welsh Government, partners and LA's. Ideas and visions have been</p>

shared across the group and they have looked at the capital and other investments given by WG needed to help develop these town centres.

Up until this year funding has been allocated annually which has been very challenging. Confirmation is awaited for the funding which will now be allocated for a 3 year strategic programme. This will allow for better discussions with partners to look at these funding options and develop ideas. This funding is available to all partners, private, public or third sector in Mid Wales.

The purpose of the programme is to develop strategic plans which align to WG policies and the local authority local plans. Schemes must be supported by a local plan which has been developed and adopted by the place plans. This gives a clear sense of ownership by the stakeholders within the towns. Plans must also tie in with other interventions e.g. housing and green and digital infrastructures also active travel and the circular economy which are themes that WG are focussed on. All applications must be made through the local authorities in the first instance where they will follow a procedure for local and regional approval. It is hoped that innovative ideas will be shared across the region to benefit all the towns.

**ACTION:** Lead partner to provide written progress report at next meeting.

NV (PAVO) commented that the progress in Ceredigion is more advanced than it is in Powys at the moment and queried how these “bottom-up” plans are arrived at as there is sometimes lack of engagement across the third sectors. PAVO are consistently trying to increase the engagement across this sector either on existing plans or new plans. In response, AD said there is no specific guidelines as to how these plans are developed, but there should be significant support from a wide range of stakeholders. In Ceredigion, there has been revenue funding used to bring these key stakeholders together. 6 place plans are in place in Ceredigion and these do need to be refreshed as they move on. The key point is that this programme is about getting stakeholders together to share ideas and drive forward action for a common goal.

## **5.2 Regional Engagement Team Report**

Claire Miles provided a written report to the meeting and highlighted the following areas.

The key area of focus and work of the RET team since the start of 202 has been to support work of officers across the two LA's and map the activity of national & regional programmes and projects. Some of this work has been on the SPF, but that will be covered later in the agenda under item 7. This was work that has come out of a report presented at the end of 2021, it was an analysis of the risks associated with the EU funding situation at that time and the end of programmes and activities. In the report today, there is a situational analysis of the pan Wales operations and where they are at present. There is also information on the future of funding and support from Business Wales and other national programmes.

There are areas of risks with programmes and the uncertainty of the future, but this is being regularly monitored as part of the RET work and work with WEFO and WG. Some of the pan Wales operations will be impacted by resources and funding even though they are being continued, this will affect the level of activity. There is a concern that this reduced level of activity will disproportionately affect Mid Wales and its very rural nature. The RET will continue to monitor the

situation and how it might impact on Mid Wales achieving the vision for the region.

CMs encouraged Partnership members to engage with the RET for any queries regarding funding, programmes and future opportunities.

### **5.3 Connectivity and Infrastructure Working Group**

Ann Elias provided a written report and gave an update on strategic transport issues affecting the region and the work of the Connectivity and Infrastructure Working Group.

Earlier this year, the Government published its levelling policy paper Levelling Up the United Kingdom. This includes details of a new devolution framework, the establishment of a new independent data body and a new Levelling Up Advisory Council. This outlines what effects the ability to bid for funding to deliver transport projects. The funding will now come from the UKG and WG. SPF will potentially offer the opportunity for funding for the revenue side of transport projects.

The Cambrian Line works are now being undertaken to re-open the line (closed due to damage from Storm Franklin in February 2022) and it will require regular work to ensure the network is protected from future threats. Network Rail have been working on improving the signalling on the lines so that it can support the new trains coming onto the network in 2023.

WG Roads Review panel is assessing their funded road projects in view of the climate emergency and the change of policy from WG. It is not clear how this will affect Mid Wales at the moment. All schemes that were due to come forward are now on stop until this review is completed.

Transport for Wales (fully funded by WG) runs the railway lines and is now taking forward bus development. This will impact Mid Wales so this is being monitored so that the region is not detrimentally affected.

Commercial freight has been back on the Cambrian Line for the first time in 30 years. The UKG Minister for Rail has just announced that they are going to set freight targets for rail use which will provide huge opportunities for Mid Wales and for businesses to decarbonise their sector.

#### **Questions**

Cllr BD asked if there is availability for funding for Mid Wales similar to HS2 funding and if it has been raised with the UK government? The WG has repeatedly said that there should be a share of the Barnett formula funding that comes from HS2. The UKG do not accept that there is a Barnett Formula coming to Wales from HS2. Other funding is being pursued with the Union Connectivity review and there is an opportunity to work with UKG & WG to improve that infrastructure should the opportunity to bid for money arise.

Cllr KH made a point about Active Travel and the three centres identified by WG in Ceredigion. It needs to be pointed out with Ministers that this needs to be extended out into more rural areas and not just the three key towns of Aberystwyth, Cardigan and Lampeter. Cllr KH asked how much collaboration is there between transport and RSP where there is a lack of human resources i.e. bus drivers? Representations have been made to WG on the Bus Reforms, rural areas need to be considered in a different manner to urban areas. Active Travel is proving difficult, with only designated communities of over 2000 people to be

targeted for active travel across the MW area. Distances travelled in rural areas are far longer than in other areas additionally the tourism area has been the growth area for cycling. It has been recognised that a funding stream needs to be established to support the connectivity within the region, hopefully a programme will come out of this which will offer funding. AE has raised the issue of lack of bus drivers in collaboration with AC-H, RSP and has been looking at the skill set and the problems that the transport industry is facing. There are also problems in the electric vehicle market and the lack of skills with mechanics for the servicing of such vehicles.

PD, FUW asked if the state of the bridges and the lines should be looked at to accommodate trains such as The Flying Scotsman. AE responded that they have advocated the return of steam and there are steam trains that run of the Heart of Wales line from Shrewsbury to Swansea. The Cambrian Line did have steam on it, but Network Rail have updated the signalling to digital and this has prohibited steam trains coming onto the line. A solution needs to be found with National Rail otherwise this will affect the whole of the steam network.

VH asked if there is an opportunity to revisit the feasibility of reinstating the Carmarthen to Aberystwyth rail line. Historically, the cost has been inhibitive, but it would enhance the region as a whole. In terms of tourism and the ferry links to Ireland, will the lack of freight impact of the visitor ferry services which might restrict Irish visitors coming into the region? AE said that some feasibility work has been done on the Carmarthen to Aberystwyth line, but it would be funded by the UKG and not WG, it is on the agenda to get further updates as to whether it will sit in future policy. On the tourism question, there has been work to promote public transport and there has been significant investment with the Trans Cymru network linking to the ferry ports. Revenue funding is needed to promote transport which is not currently available to us.

#### **5.4 Energy Advisory Group**

Tom Yeo provided a written report for the meeting.

TY provided a brief re-cap to those who are not familiar with the energy programme. The MW Energy Strategy was commissioned by the Welsh Government, there is one for each of the regions. The WG energy service have supported GMW to develop the strategy with key stakeholders and forms part of the WG's Net Zero Wales Strategy. The regional strategy was signed off last year and 2022 has focussed on developing the Action Plan needed to deliver the energy system outlined in the strategy. 4 workshops focusing on agriculture, domestic energy, power generation and transport and have been held with over 130 participants attending. Outputs from the meetings have been considered by the advisory group and the final list of actions are currently being reviewed. The next stage is to seek final approval and sign off from both LA's in the region to develop a governance arrangement which oversee the delivery of the action plan and how it is monitored and evaluated. The Action Plan will adapt to changes on policy at all levels including regional and local levels, this will ensure that opportunities are maximised.

#### **Questions**

Cllr BD asked if there was an awareness that there is not enough capacity to take electricity produced on farms? TY replied it is an issue in Mid Wales, both the electric and gas grids are constrained with very little capacity available. It needs to be addressed in a few ways, firstly ensure that the group feeds in and lobbies the WG through the Future Energy Wales Project and National Infrastructure

	<p>Commission for Wales raising the issues faced in Mid Wales. There is a need to look at the local use of energy which is produced off grid in the region and work with farmers to ensure they can operate as normal but support their local communities. There are barriers, but TY is happy to continue engagement. Cllr BD pointed out the feed-in tariffs which are set by UKG are too low, perhaps pressure is needed there to increase the tariffs. TY agreed and focus needs to be on the challenges faced in the rural areas. Another barrier is the upfront cost for farmers.</p> <p>NV, PAVO what are the timescales for the Action Plan? The Action Plan is in the final draft format and is being reviewed in terms of resourcing and the ability to take it forward. No confirmed timescale at the moment.</p> <p>Cllr JG-W, Chair is it easy to set up schemes for local use of the energy rather than it be exported to the Grid? TY replied that there might be more information coming out in the future where there are different strategies and the local area energy plans. This will possibly look at the energy networks in local towns and provide opportunities to use the energy locally and differently and consider how it is stored locally. It is complex, but it is something to look at in the future. NV added that there is a requirement within government guidelines to consider community ownership of energy developments such as windfarms bringing the investment back to the region.</p>
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>6.1 Government(s) Update</b> Peter James provided verbal update.</p> <p>The minutes from the meeting in February capture the position of the Regional Economic Frameworks that were published back in December 2021. The next stage is the delivery and the WG regional office working with regional partners and co-investment in terms of the core priorities for the region. The WG Regional team continue to work very closely on the Growth Deal with CMn's team, the PMO and UK Government to help move it forward into delivery. Work will continue on the Portfolio Business Case to obtain an offer letter early in the new year.</p> <p><b>6.2 UK Government Update</b> CMs informed the meeting that there was no representation from the UKG at the meeting.</p>
<p><b>7.</b></p>	<p><b>Shared Prosperity Fund</b> Carwyn Jones-Evans (CJ-E) and Rebecca Jeremy (RJ) provided a verbal update and a presentation on the Shared Prosperity Fund.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> A copy of the presentation will be circulated after the meeting.</p> <p>The SPF is part of the UK Gov Levelling Up policy. Both LA's were successful in their bids for LU funding and the CR bids. The UKSPF is predominantly revenue funding and this will be covered in the presentation which will outline what work is being done as a region to develop the Regional Investment Plan and what stage this is currently at. A webinar is planned for 11 July to provide this information to a wider audience.</p> <p><b>Questions</b> Cllr BD asked firstly, if there is an underspend in Year 1 due to time constraints and the money goes back, does that mean that more money will then be available for Year 2. Secondly, has the decision been made on which authority will lead on this</p>



	<p>fund and how will this decision be made. CJ-E said that the funding is currently on a “use it or lose it” basis. However, all LA’s on the WLGA are not happy with this. Mid Wales does not have a large allocation when compared with other regions across Wales, it is a common issue that is being escalated and both Leaders will be involved in discussions over the next few weeks with WG &amp; UKG. The discussions are underway with the Chief Executives and officers across the region regarding the lead authority. It is not a decision for the Partnership to take and will be decided by the LA’s.</p> <p>CJ-E thanked all the officers that have worked alongside himself and Becky Jeremy as it has been incredibly busy to pull this together. The Chair added his thanks to the Officers for the work that has been done to date.</p>
<p><b>8.</b></p>	<p><b>Any other business</b> There was no further business.</p>
<p><b>9.</b></p>	<p><b>Dates of Future Meetings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2022, County Hall, Llandrindod Wells (subject to current COVID case numbers)</li> <li>• Monday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2022</li> </ul>

