



# Growing Mid Wales

## April 2024

### Welcome to our April newsletter!

As spring blossoms around us, so too does progress within the Mid Wales Growth Deal. We're thrilled to share that significant strides have been made, and as business cases are evolving further, transformative opportunities in our region are being created.

Over the past few months since our last Growth Deal update, our dedicated team has been hard at work, collaborating with project sponsors, government and key stakeholders to advance the Mid Wales Growth Deal. Together, we're shaping a future where Mid Wales thrives as a hub of innovation, opportunity, and sustainable growth.

Our *Meet the Team* colleague this month is Peter Jones, Growth Deal Projects and Performance Manager. Peter shares an insightful look at his role and what exciting opportunities he sees that the Growth Deal will bring to Mid Wales.

As part of Growing Mid Wales' energy work, our *Sustainable Business Solutions* event took place on 11 March. Read about how the event brought together industry leaders, experts, and businesses to explore ways to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and energy costs [here](#).

### Get Involved:

Your input is invaluable as we continue to shape Growing Mid Wales. Whether you're a business owner, public or private sector staff, a community leader, or a resident passionate about the region's future, there are many ways to get involved:

- Attend community forums and stakeholder meetings to share your ideas and feedback.
- Stay informed through our newsletters, website updates, and social media channels.
- Collaborate with us on projects and initiatives that align with your expertise and interests.
- Advocate for Growing Mid Wales within your networks and among decision-makers.

Together, we can build a brighter future for Mid Wales, where prosperity is shared, and opportunities abound for all.

Thank you for your ongoing support and commitment to our shared vision. Let's continue this journey of growth and development, one step at a time.

*The Growing Mid Wales team*

[Cover: Elan Valley, Powys ©Visit Wales]



*1 - Sustainable Business Solutions event*

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## Mid Wales Growth Deal update

### Portfolio Progress

#### Projects



Good progress is being made with the nine standalone projects. All have now gone through the Strategic Outline Case phase of business case development and all (except the Elan Valley Lakes project - more news on this project later on) are working through their Outline Business Cases. A summary of the projects can be found on our [website](#).

Peter, our Growth Deal Projects and Performance Manager (read more about Peter's role later on in the 'Meet the Team' section) has been engaging with all the project sponsors, building up closer working relationships, providing support and guidance on project development.

#### Digital Programme

The [Digital Programme](#) is currently finalising the procurement process to carry out a Mobile Data Mapping project. This work will focus on detailed mapping of mobile coverage and capacity across the region, providing significantly greater insights into data that is currently available, with the approach having not been applied on this scale previously.

In addition to this, the Programme will shortly be procuring to complete a project which will focus on other forms of digital connectivity such as broadband and LoRaWAN, as well as the regions relevant infrastructure. Both Projects are funded through the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Funding, with the objective of both being:

- To collect and map data to provide a complete picture of the status of existing and future broadband, mobile and LoRaWAN connectivity across Ceredigion and Powys.

Both projects will inform the work of the wider Digital Programme as a detailed understanding is required to identify where digital infrastructure is weakest, where other interventions are planned, and where further intervention is required. Delivery and data collection for the project will take place in the coming months with project completion scheduled for the Autumn.

To complement the mapping work and to better assess the current and future needs of businesses, the Digital Programme is running a [Business Digital Connectivity Survey](https://bit.ly/BusinessDigitalSurvey). The survey aims to engage with as many businesses across the region as possible to gain insight and data on current infrastructure needs and feedback on its suitability for business operations. This data will be valuable in gaining baseline data and being able to make comparisons against future iterations of the survey to evaluate the impact of projects delivered by the digital Programme.

The survey will run until **24/05/24**. Take part in the survey here <https://bit.ly/BusinessDigitalSurvey> Join us in shaping the future of digital connectivity in our region. Share with your business contacts via [X](#) or [LinkedIn](#)!



2 - <https://bit.ly/BusinessDigitalSurvey>

### What else is the Digital Programme working on?

The Digital Programme continues to progress the focused capital projects through the stages of their respective business case development. It is currently planned to finalise the Outline Business Cases for both the 4G+ Mobile Project and the Very Hard to Reach Properties Project over the coming months and be in a position to receive approval from the GMW Board to progress towards Full Business Case and delivery.

Two further 'pipeline' projects have recently been identified with the strategic case of both of these projects currently being worked upon:

- **Internet Of Things (IOT)/ LoRaWAN Stimulation Project:** The aim of this project to increase both the coverage and exploitation of IOT and LoRaWAN technologies within business

operations, across several sectors within the region to improve efficiencies, increase opportunities and bring about cost savings.

- **Digital Hubs Project:** This will focus on integrating advanced digital solutions into appropriate public places that will evolve into dynamic Digital Hubs.

FOCUS: First Mid Wales Growth Deal project given green light to the final stage of business case



During its meeting on 19th April, the Growing Mid Wales Board granted approval of the Outline Business Case (OBC) for the Elan Valley Lakes project. This decision marks a major milestone for the Growth Deal as the first project to advance to the next stage of development under the Board's approval.

With this milestone achieved, the project is now poised to progress towards the completion of a comprehensive Full Business Case; the crucial final step required to secure [Growth Deal](#) funding prior to implementation\*.

On receiving the news, Martin Driscoll, Senior Responsible Owner for the Elan Valley Lakes project and Director of Business Services and People, Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water, said: "We are pleased that

the project has reached such an important stage as we aspire to deliver a flagship destination in Mid Wales. We believe it will be key to achieving the Growth Deal's Strengthened Tourism Offer priority area. This project aims to enhance visitor experience, increase revenue, and sustain the natural beauty and environment of the Elan Valley. We look forward to continuing to work with the Mid Wales Growth Deal team to make this happen."

A spokesperson for the Growing Mid Wales Board said: "We were pleased to approve the Outline Business Case for this project at our Board recently; it is an exciting milestone to be the first project to reach this step with the Mid Wales Growth Deal so far. At the Full Business Case phase, the hard work will continue as the in-depth finance and procurement details will be finalised and we will do what we can to see the Growth Deal investment leveraged to its full potential and attract investment into the region to enhance and improve our tourism offer."

For the full article, visit our [News page](#).

**Project:**  
Elan Valley Lakes

**Project Sponsor:**  
Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water

**Strategic Growth Priority Area:**  
Strengthened Tourism Offer

**Project Summary**

- Improve the quality of the visitor experience at Elan Valley Lakes and to limit the impact on the environment through low carbon amenities and infrastructure, using renewable energy sources.
- Amenities will include water sports, improved visitor accommodation, EV charging points, and connections for hydro power to supply Elan Valley Trusts assets.

Llyn Canelberth Cymru  
Growing  
Mid Wales

Case Study: Elan Valley Lakes project





[Elan Valley](#) is an iconic visitor attraction, with a unique heritage, spectacular dams and lakes and an epic landscape. It is a haven for wildlife and provides recreational opportunities to the public both in the immediate area, regionally and beyond.

Elan Valley covers 1% of the land area of Wales and has a host of nature and landscape assets, including sites of strategic scientific interest (SSSI's), International Dark Skies Park and Celtic Rainforest.

A major £21.7m programme of development, the Elan Valley Lakes project is seeking funding from the Mid Wales Growth Deal over a 5-year infrastructure period.

The Elan Valley Lakes proposal is embedded in the Growth Deal strategic growth priorities in delivering sustainable tourism - a flagship visitor destination, including upgrading existing facilities and infrastructure and providing new amenities and services for public enjoyment.

The 6 main components of the Elan Valley Lakes proposal are:

- Visitor Centre redevelopment and expansion
- Sawmill development as a hub for water sports & events
- High-quality accommodation, including glamping pods
- Upgrading footpaths and bike trails
- Woodland conservation management
- Green energy supply through connections to the hydro mains ring.

The Elan Valley Lakes proposal will be implemented by Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water who will make a significant financial contribution to the capital investment. Once the project is completed, Welsh Water Adventures, the Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water department that manages its recreation attractions will manage and operate the facilities and services.

While the Full Business Case development is now underway, project sponsors, Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water are also proceeding with the next key milestones in their project development and have appointed an architect to provide [RIBA Stage 2 and 3 designs](#).

## Meet the Team

Peter Jones - Growth Deal Projects and Performance Manager



### **When did you start with the team?**

*I joined the Mid Wales Growth Deal (MWGD) Portfolio Management Office in December 2023 as Projects and Performance Manager. I had previously taken early retirement in 2018 but the potential of the MWGD struck me as both a challenge and an exciting opportunity, hence my return to the workplace. I trust my experience can contribute to its success.*

### **Can you tell us more about your role?**

*The MWGD currently has nine live projects selected as the initial tranche of initiatives selected for development. Those projects are busy navigating the 5-case model prescribed by Welsh and UK Government to secure capital funding. Put simply, the projects need the funding available through the MWGD and in return, Growing Mid Wales needs to have confidence the investment will impact positively on the Mid Wales economy. The portfolio office needs to provide both transparency and assurance as programmes and projects navigate that journey. My role aims to establish a strong partnership between the MWGD and the projects, give visibility of progress to the Growing Mid Wales Board and to understand the challenges and emerging issues they face whilst assisting them in identifying pragmatic solutions wherever possible.*

### **What are your current priorities?**

*It is still relatively early in my tenure. I have immersed myself in understanding the prescribed 5-case model process and the various projects which currently make up the MWGD. I have touched base with them all and managed to visit the majority in person. I have seen this as essential, getting a physical feel for each development, something I believe can be quite difficult to gauge through technology such as virtual meetings sometimes. We must attempt to strike the right balance in terms of our method of interaction with projects.*

*I have also been developing the early stages of a benefits realisation framework. This will enable the projects to adopt a reasonably consistent approach to benefits management, standardising*

*monitoring arrangements where appropriate and enabling us to take an early view on how the important post-delivery evaluation work might take shape. Organising this information in an orderly manner will be essential to enable Growing Mid Wales and their key stakeholders to evaluate the success of the Mid Wales Growth Deal over time.*

*I have also been working on how we might report progress of the projects and the mechanisms required to enable that. Avoiding duplication in reporting efforts by each project whilst at the same time, providing the GMW Board with the visibility and assurance they require are essential considerations. Therefore, striking the right balance becomes key and that can only be achieved through discussion with individual project managers regarding their current reporting arrangements, and clarity from the board regarding their expectations.*



3 - Peter during a visit to the Elan Valley Lakes project, Powys.

**What developments would you like to see in the next 12 months?**

*Whilst it is still early days, my initial observations indicate that forming a sense of partnership is a vital component in securing successful delivery of the MWGD. I want to ensure that each individual project feels part of a wider amalgamation of initiatives and that we are "all in it together". Initial discussions with some of the managers indicate that a project management network would be a valuable development in further strengthening our combined efforts to successfully deliver the strategic objectives of the MWGD to secure additional investment, create jobs and improve economic productivity across Mid Wales. Creating the right environment to share in each other's success whilst also identifying and resolving shared issues and challenges could be a constructive way forward.*

**Being new to the role, what opportunities do you see for the region from the Mid Wales Growth Deal?**

*In the grand scheme of things, £110 million is not a vast sum. However, for Mid Wales it is a significant opportunity. Through a rigorous process, two programmes and nine live projects have been selected and are in the process of developing their business cases using the 5-case model. Some are seeing the light at the end of what is a complex and frustrating process tunnel, and that is to be celebrated. Successful delivery will bring about significant improvements for the Mid Wales economy and those of us who live within it. There will always be intense demand for funding. Successful delivery of what I consider to be “big ticket” developments will have the added benefit of promoting additional private investment into Mid Wales and should be prioritised:*

- *Businesses will benefit from the research and innovation opportunities that materialise.*
- *Manufacturing capacity will fill the units we develop.*
- *Individuals will take advantage of the skills development and apprenticeship opportunities accessible to them.*
- *Visitors will be able to enjoy the array of recreational opportunities available.*

*All four aspects will both create and safeguard jobs and improve productivity in the Mid Wales economy, further cementing the region as a “great place to live and work”. To help in that journey, we may need to take the odd risk, displaying trust and confidence in the partners we work alongside. We must ensure we enable progress and not stifle it.*

***What’s been your biggest achievement?***

*My biggest achievement has had nothing to do with work. Way above anything else, my biggest achievement and what gives me the most pleasure by far is family. I am the proud father of five beautiful, successful, and healthy children and at last count, Taid to four amazing grandchildren. I can’t think of anything that could ever better that.*

***One word that sums up the Growing Mid Wales Team:***

*I could suggest we are sometimes ‘frustrated’ but can say we are always ‘committed’.*

## Other news

### 40th anniversary of dedicated service in local government



🎉 The Growing Mid Wales Team wishes to congratulate our colleague, Ann Elias on her recent 40th anniversary of dedicated service in local government. She has shown unwavering commitment and dedication to her work throughout this time, and continues to make a substantial impact on regional transport in Mid Wales.

Congratulations Ann, thank you for your commitment and continued friendship. 🎉

### Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership

Exciting discussions had recently at the Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership (RSP) Public Sector Recruitment, Retention & Skills workshop facilitated by [Wavehill](#). Collaborating to identify talent acquisition, foster retention, and boost skill development for a stronger workforce for our community.



### Check if your business is eligible to benefit from grants to help reduce running costs

Micro, small and medium-sized businesses in the retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors can now check if they are eligible for Welsh Government funding to help them reduce their running costs.

Grants of between £5,000 and £10,000 will be available through the Welsh Government's Future Proofing Fund to help businesses to invest in renewable energy technology, carry out improvements to the fabric of business premises, and upgrades to systems or machinery to reduce energy use.

See the eligibility checker: [Future proofing fund | Business Wales \(gov.wales\)](#)

[Business Wales](#) is hosting webinars on 30 April and 2 May to guide you through the process: [ow.ly/kUlg50Rm2Rb](https://ow.ly/kUlg50Rm2Rb)



### Free virtual energy seminars

The Ynni Cymru team have arranged a series of free virtual energy seminars on 8, 15 & 22 May that will help you understand and navigate energy systems of today in order to help collectively design an energy system fit for the future.

Who should attend?

👉 Individuals from community energy organisations and enterprises 👉 Officers from local authorities and other public sector organisations with an interest in energy systems 👉 SMEs interested in energy developments 👉 Anyone with a general interest in learning more about energy and the work of Ynni Cymru.

Book here:

📅 8 May – essential concepts for understanding energy systems >>> <https://lnkd.in/eamUXibS>

📅 15 May – key aspects and challenges of the transition to net zero energy systems >>>

📅 22 May – smart local energy systems >>> <https://lnkd.in/ec2Tr3zM>

More information here (LinkedIn only): [https://www.linkedin.com/posts/local-partnerships-llp-free-virtual-energy-seminars-as-part-activity-7188084198862200833-drs/?utm\\_source=combined\\_share\\_message&utm\\_medium=member\\_desktop](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/local-partnerships-llp-free-virtual-energy-seminars-as-part-activity-7188084198862200833-drs/?utm_source=combined_share_message&utm_medium=member_desktop)

## Keep up to Date

Need to catch up on what's been discussed in our meetings? Here's a reminder of where you can find the minutes for the following meetings:

- All minutes relating to the Growing Mid Wales Board are hosted on Powys County Council [website](#).
- Papers relating to the Growing Mid Wales Partnership can be found on our [website](#).

Keep up to date with Growing Mid Wales news, developments on activity and organisations we support by following our Twitter and Linked In pages:

<https://twitter.com/growingmidwales>

[www.linkedin.com/company/growing-mid-wales](http://www.linkedin.com/company/growing-mid-wales)

We're eager to reach out to as many organisations and businesses across Mid Wales as possible. You can make this possible by following, liking and sharing our pages.

Disclaimer: As a Growing Mid Wales Stakeholder you receive these emails so that we can share news and information with you on a regular basis. You can inform us if you no longer wish to receive these emails by emailing [growingmidwales@ceredigion.gov.uk](mailto:growingmidwales@ceredigion.gov.uk).

