



Partneriaeth Tyfu Canolbarth Cymru Growing Mid Wales Partnership

Monday 27 February 2023

1.00pm

Virtual Meeting

In Attendance

Councillor James Gibson-Watt, Leader of Powys County Council **(Chair) (Cllr JG-W)**
Aggie Caesar-Homden, Growing Mid Wales **(ACH)**
Arwyn Watkins, Cambrian Training **(ArW)**
Barbara Green, Growing Mid Wales **(BG)**
Becky Jeremy, Powys County Council **(BJy)**
Brett John, UK Government **(BRJ)**
Carwyn Jones-Evans, Ceredigion County Council **(CJE)**
Catherine Isik, Welsh Government **(CI)**
Catherine Mealing-Jones, Brecon Beacons National Park **(CM-J)**
Claire Miles, Growing Mid Wales **(CMs)**
Councillor Jackie Charlton, Powys County Council **(JC)**
Councillor Bryan Davies, Leader, Ceredigion County Council **(Cllr BD)**
Councillor Clive Davies, Ceredigion County Council **(Cllr CD)**
Councillor David Selby, Powys County Council **(DS)**
David Owen, Growing Mid Wales **(DO)**
Diane Reynolds, Powys County Council **(DR)**
Fiona Clay-Poole, WLGA **(FCP)**
Gary Mitchell, PAVO **(GM)**
Gavin Bown, Natural Resources Wales **(GaB)**
Glenn Bowen, CWMPAS **(GIB)**
Hywel Davies, UWTSD **(HD)**
Lowri Gwilym, WLGA **(LG)**
Mark Dacey, NPTC Group of Colleges **(MD)**
Mark Williams, Welsh Government **(MW)**
Michelle Muireasgha, PAVO **(MM)**
Nigel Brinn, Powys County Council **(NB)**
Nathan Richards, Welsh Government **(NR)**
Nia Williams, Mid Wales Joint Health Committee **(NiaW)**
Nicola Williams, Powys County Council **(NW)**
Rhys Morris, Welsh Government **(RM)**
Russell Hughes-Pickering, Ceredigion County Council **(RH-P)**
Teleri Davies, CAVO **(TD)**
Val Hawkins, Mid Wales Tourism **(MWT)**
Vanessa Cashmore, Coleg Ceredigion **(VC)**

Speakers

Gail Dervish, WCVA **(GD)**
Alun Jones, WCVA **(AJ)**
Rhian Hayward, AberInnovation **(RH)**
Luke Player, AberInnovation **(LP)**

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.

1.	<p>Apologies for absence Apologies for absence were received from:- Ann Elias, Ceredigion County Council (AE) Ann Watkin, Welsh Government (AW) Arwyn Davies, Ceredigion County Council (AD) Barry Rees, Ceredigion County Council (BR) Caroline Turner, Powys County Council (CT) Cathy Martin, Growing Mid Wales (CMn) Ceri Stephens, Mid Wales Manufacturing Group (CS) Councillor Keith Henson, Ceredigion County Council (Cllr KH) Cyngorydd Dafydd Meurig, Gwynedd CC Eifion Evans, Ceredigion County Council (EE) Hazel Lloyd-Lubran, CAVO (HL) Peter Howells, NFU Cymru (PH) Peter James, Welsh Government (PJ) Peter Skitt, Hywel Dda Healthboard, NHS (PS) Rhodri Llwyd Morgan, Aberystwyth University (RLIM)</p>
2.	<p>Minutes Minutes were agreed as read. Proposed by Councillor Bryan Davies. Seconded by Arwyn Watkins.</p>
3.	<p>Update from meeting with Vaughan Gething MS The Chair, Councillor James Gibson-Watt provided the update on the meeting which he attended with Councillor Bryan Davies and other officers. The Minister was informed that work was progressing well and there were several projects ready to go once the funding was agreed. The Minister discussed the alignment between the Growth Deal and LUF & SPF projects and schemes. He was reassured that this was very important to the region and work was ongoing to ensure no duplication with the Growth Deal projects providing good links. Cllr JG-W stressed that planning was important and pointed out that the requirements to continually update and renew the local development plans and the strategic regional development plans were putting strains on both authorities and was beyond the capacity of the LA's or as a region.</p> <p>Cllr Bryan Davies felt that the Minister was listening and both leaders emphasised that a meeting with both governments is important. This meeting was requested in December 2022, but nothing has been arranged to date. Speaking from a Ceredigion point of view, Cllr BD drew the Minister's attention to issue with phosphates and planning specifically the Teifi Valley SSE and the marine SSE. If a negative report is received it will impact the Ceredigion projects and the Growth Deal. The Minister was interested to see what the private sector will have to offer and it was emphasised to him the importance of the input from the Economic Advisory Group (EAG) in the recent workshops.</p> <p>Both Cllr JG-W and Cllr BD were very pleased with the meeting and are awaiting the outcomes.</p>
4.	<p>Business Updates Claire Miles (CM) informed the meeting that a different approach was being taken to report the business updates back to the Partnership. A consolidated presentation of the business will cover the key updates, context and issues in relation to delivering the Mid Wales Growth Deal and it will be referred to as a landscape review. This will be more efficient for the meeting and allow more time for discussion on other items on the agenda from external partners and government. Regional officers present in the meeting would be able to take any questions arising from the presentation.</p> <p>The papers covered within the presentation have been circulated and cover more detail. If there are any important areas that need to be covered in more detail in future meetings, they will be on the agenda and not hidden in landscape review.</p> <p>The presentation was shared to the meeting and CM highlighted the following areas.</p> <p>Mid Wales Growth Deal Nicola Williams (NW) will cover any questions in Cathy Martin's absence. The current main focus for the Growth Deal is bringing the business cases forward, continuing project and programme development and updating the position on the portfolio business case (PBC). On</p>

10th February, a workshop was held with UK and Welsh government officials and the EAG which looked at proposed changes to the PBC. The revised PBC will be going to the Programme Board on 28th March. There was also a recent portfolio assurance review carried out by Welsh Government in February and initial feedback has been good with an amber/green rating. This is very positive for the processes and work that has been done to date.

Stakeholder workshops have been held recently where potential project and programmes have brought forward their strategic outline cases and ideas. There is still plenty of work to be done in 2023.

Regional Skills Partnership (RSP)

The main focus of the RSP has been the Mid Wales Regional Skills Plan. This sets out the priorities for investment in the region. It has recently been approved at the GMW Board meeting and will be launched at the RSP engagement event in Llandrindod Wells on 23rd March.

Michelle Muireasgha (MM), PAVO commented that PAVO working with the Health Board and PCC did a feasibility study for the CRF on the needs, skills & training for volunteers in Powys and people who wanted to use volunteering as a pathway to employment. Has this been included in the plan?

Aggie Caesar-Homden (AC-H) said the plan was drawn together using all partner networks including the Powys Teaching Health Board and Hywel Dda and the community and voluntary sector. The report itself hasn't been included in the plan, but happy to add it as an addendum.

ACTION: MM to send information to Barbara Green (BG) after the meeting. Details will be forwarded to AC-H.

Mid Wales Study & Tourism Action Plan

A joint piece of work between the LA's, Growing Mid Wales, Visit Wales, Welsh Government, Mid Wales Tourism and regional tourism stakeholders. This work was funded by the RDP. Tourism is in the Growing Mid Wales vision document and is an important employer in the region providing over 23k jobs.

CM outlined what the report detailed, the stages in its development and the final action plan. The findings show that the work in the wider tourism sector is community led. Sustainability was a key theme in terms of the environment but also in terms of the tourism economy in general. This translated into a need for more spend per visit and dispersal of visits throughout the region, rapid economic growth was not a priority. The outdoor opportunities and the landscape of the region featured heavily together with a thriving event programme. Mid Wales came through as a place to get away from it all. The next steps are to work with Visit Wales on the action plan and internally to work on resourcing for this work to continue. CM encouraged partners at the meeting to consider collaboration on this work to support the development of the sector. The Stage 2 final report and action plan was sent out prior to the meeting.

Cllr BD thanked CM for the information. There is pressure on authorities to work on a tourism levy, has this been taken into consideration? CM responded that it was not included as a specific question during the research, but it did come up in conversations with stakeholders. CM was unable to confirm any details without referring directly to the report at this stage.

The Chair commented that the accessibility to the region is not referred to often enough and using the A470 as an example of what is now a very good route through the region he compared it to some roads that border the region. CM replied that accessibility was not highlighted as an area of concern from the work carried out.

Innovation Strategy

Welsh Government have published their Innovation Strategy. It was highlighted at the last Partnership meeting as a grey policy area. GMW has been engaged in the consultation and

development of this strategy which sets out an integrated cross government approach looking at innovation in its wider sense. The strategy has four themes, education, economy, health & wellbeing and climate & nature. A section within the strategy refers to regional innovation and the roles of regions in the innovation eco-system. It is a high level strategic document, but GMW hopes to engage with WG on the next steps which will be the action plan to deliver the outcomes. CM also noted that work has been carried out with UK R&I and their Wales office and the need to engage with all partners on this area.

Arwyn Davies (AD) noted that this is very important to Mid Wales strategically as a region. This is an opportunity to further focus on this area and bring key partners together to look at how this will benefit the region. The region has not been successful in attracting UKR&I funding to the area in the past despite what there is to offer within the region and this could be key to future developments.

Councillor Jackie Charlton (Cllr JC), PCC noted a point of collaboration and citizen impact on the slides. How is this going to work and what does that point mean? This is a good way of bringing in Citizens Assemblies into the region and deliver on those points. CM responded that it is a WG document so she is unable to speak specifically on that point. However in terms of collaboration, work has been going on for over a year on input into this document and workshops have been held working on the design of this strategy. We do not have anyone from WG innovation at this meeting, but CM is happy to provide feedback to WG on the point mentioned above.

ACTION: CM to feedback to WG innovation colleagues the point made by Cllr JC on collaboration and citizen impact and what does this mean.

ACTION: CM to circulate presentation after the meeting.

In terms of policy and funding landscape, the cessation of EU funding and current level of regional activity, the regional officers have been considering what comes next for GMW and regional collaboration. This has been working towards the aims and objectives for the GMW Vision document which was finalised in early 2020. The document reflects a pre pandemic economy and does not reflect changes in the policy landscape after BREXIT and the global economic downturn. The funding cycles take the region up to 2025, but what happens after that? This is a good opportunity to review what GMW is looking at for the next 5-10 years. A paper has been taken to the GMW Management Group and over the next months the Vision document will be reviewed and updated to reflect the points noted above and consider the policy landscape and funding structures that have changed the way of working. It will be an opportunity to update external partners including governments on the updated structures and how the GMW is now working and aligning with regional economic framework and wider policies.

Lowri Gwilym (LG), WLGA agreed it is very timely to do this work, to refresh and reflect on the work done to date, commenting that the breadth of the work done by GMW is impressive and she was happy to support the work mentioned above. A meeting had been held prior to the partnership meeting with the Strategic Forum for Regional Investment where the OECD gave an update on the next phase of their work. It was requested that they align their work with the work proposed in the region. LG will ensure that GMW is linked into that work.

Arwyn Watkins (ArW) supported the need to review and update, it is critically important in terms of skills and what is needed in the future and the more up to date the document is, it is more beneficial for all.

CM finished by adding that the regional officers are available if any partners would like further information, but encouraged members to sign up to the GMW monthly newsletter which provides regular updates on the regional work.

Item 4.ii would not be covered as Ann Elias was not at the meeting, but a comprehensive report had been circulated prior to the meeting with other papers.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Becky Jeremy (BJy) introduced herself and informed the meeting that she would shortly be taking up the role of Mid Wales Regional Manager for the UKSPF moving from PCC to CCC.

Before covering some key points from the paper submitted by Carwyn Jones-Evans, BJy noted a minor error in section 2.2, the dates for the Cabinet reports are actually July & December.

Referring to Section 2.5, as of 11th January, CCC as lead authority received notification from the UK Government that pre-payment conditions had been resolved. There are some issues that are still to be resolved or are awaiting further information. This covers managing underspends and reporting requirements. Since the update was written, some further information has been received and is being worked on.

Multiply – this is currently focusing on numeracy skills, but LA's across Wales would like it to include digital skills as well. Discussion on this have not yet concluded.

Further guidance and detail is also awaited on monitoring and evaluation.

Section 3.1 The service level agreement is currently being prepared between PCC & CCC. The SPF does not require any formal agreement at regional level but the model is CCC as the lead authority with the constituted local partnerships. To date PCC LP have met twice.

Section 4 (Project Activity). Both LA's have been carrying out internal work identifying proposals and activities to mitigate Year 1 underspends. Planning work is underway to identify realistic spend and any gaps.

The focus now is on the timings for the first call for applications. They are being discussed by the LA's local delivery teams and local partnerships. Both LA's will be able to tailor the timings of the calls, but there will be alignment across both areas as much as possible to ensure consistency. A joint PR on 9th March will announce information on the calls and a ZOOM webinar is planned for 16th March to provide information on the application processes, the fund and the call focus.

The Chair, Cllr JG-W asked when do the years start and end in relation to the fund? BJy responded they are financial years; Year 1 will end on 31st March 2023 after which it will move straight onto Year 2. Cllr JG-W commented about the lack of money spent in Year 1 and what happens to the underspend? BJy replied that due to the delays in the approval process, both LA's identified council projects and papers were taken to both Cabinets outlining the plans to mitigate the possible loss of funding. As a region, there is uncommitted spend that the region is looking to move into Year 2 and work is ongoing with UKGovt. to consider what needs to be done to secure that funding. The region has been informed that reprofiling can be done, but it will be subject to submission of a credible plan and information on the definition of a credible plan has just been received.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

Gary Mitchell (GM), PAVO asked what projects are Ceredigion supporting in Year 1 and what information can be shared to this group?

ACTION: BJy to request information from CJ-E that can be then circulated to the Partnership.

GM pointed out that PCC had approved 33 projects with £3.3m spend, but with a £600 underspend to carry over to Year 2, is that correct? GM noted that PAVO and CAVO need to recognise that this is a replacement for regional EU funding and that several voluntary groups are struggling to understand what is required from them to apply, but the webinar & PR will help to clarify this. Everyone needs to plan to work quickly on Year 2 to push it out due to the tight timings.

GM asked if the regions LA's had spoken to other LA's? Gwynedd's model is interesting and they recently put out a call for minimum spend of £250K per project.

	<p>BJy replied noting that LA delivery teams and partnerships are working together on a regular and continuous basis. It is recognised that resources are needed in both LA's, but it is unlikely that the region will follow the Gwynedd model. Information will be forthcoming in the next few weeks.</p> <p>Cllr BD commented that figures would be available from Arwyn Davies. Members need to be aware that both Leaders have been raising the Multiply issue and digital and literacy skills for some time in several forums and we are still waiting for answers.</p> <p>AD is happy to share details of the schemes that have been supported to date. There will be more information on the areas that will be supported coming out on 9th March and this is being done in a targeted way. Consultation has been done for both the local and regional strategies and building on work with CRF. It should be clear to partners where the priorities and opportunities are and what ideas are needed to attain the strategic goals locally and regionally. The approach is different from LA's and there are specific reasons for that. ACTION: Scheme information to be circulated to Partnership members</p> <p>Glenn Bowen, CWMPAS (GIB) requested that the application process for the region is made as easy as possible so that it can move swiftly through the processes that are needed. Resources are limited for applicants, specifically in the voluntary sector. BJy informed the meeting that there will be one form which will be duplicated across both authorities and available via the GMW website and both LA websites. For regional projects, applicants will need to apply to both LA's so they are considered by the local partnerships.</p> <p>Val Hawkins, Mid Wales Tourism (MWT) the focus for GMW Partnership was transformational change which was an important vision. The SPF regional fund with tight timescales makes it difficult to put regional bids in as it has been led on LA level rather than as a regional body. For strategic bids, the regional element is important, but disappointing that this has not been considered earlier in the planning.</p> <p>Lowri Gwilym, WLGA (LG) informed the meeting about the lobbying and negotiating work being done by the WLGA. Clarification from UK Government was only received the week previous on a number of fundamental issues to enable the lead LA's to proceed. The four lead LA's across Wales are proceeding at risk because of the way the fund is set up. It has been very challenging to work regionally when 22 unitary authorities were given funding allocation on a local level. One constraint is the annual grant determination letters, a Section 151 office in a lead authority will be cautious about signing the annual legal documents. Grant determination letters have not been issued for the three years of funding, it is being done year by year and is challenging for the lead LAs. WLGA is supporting the lead LAs to get the funds running and that funding is not lost. Meeting with UK government on 2nd March to make sure the Year 1 underspend is transferred into Year 2 & 3. No funding after March 2025, this means 18 months of delivery time, this is not the replacement funding for EU funds that was hoped for. Projects will need to be closed in December 2024 and LG is working with CJ-E & BJy to ensure that the arrangements reflect the position that the Mid Wales region is in.</p> <p>The Chair thanked LG for this important update which makes everyone aware of the work that is being done and the constraints that are in place.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Government(s) Updates</p> <p>5.1 Welsh Government Update Rhys Morris, Welsh Government (RM) New Chief Regional Officer for Mid West & North Wales, replacing Rhodri Griffiths and Gwenllian. RM will be more involved in the future, but has only been in post a few weeks so unable to give a report at this time. ACTION: RM to provide an update which will be circulated to Partnership members.</p> <p>5.2 UK Government Update Catherine Isik (CI) provided a brief update. CI appreciated the position that the LA's & the region are in and the uncertainty of some of the areas of the SPF. UK Govt. are continuing to work with LA and work is ongoing especially on multiply and credible plans. CI confirmed that there is a rollover of the underspend in Year 1 to Year 2 & 3 with a credible plan. These</p>

	<p>areas are discussed in fortnightly meetings with Huw Bryer, Deputy Director for the Wales Team and Matt Hicks.</p> <p>On the LUF, UK Govt are continuing to work with LA's on LUF Round 1 projects. This is progressing. With regards to the LUF Round 2, UK Govt. are looking to give feedback shortly on the unsuccessful bids. More information will be forthcoming for LUF Round 3.</p> <p>CI introduced Brett John, UK Government (BRJ) who is the new Area Lead for Mid & South West Wales. BRJ said he was looking forward to working with the region as the work with SPF & LUF progresses. Meetings will be held this week with contacts in both LAs to look at issues in more detail.</p> <p>QUESTIONS Cllr BD are there going to be any discussions on Round 3? CI is happy to listen and willing to discuss outside of the meeting. ACTION: CI to email Cllr BD to arrange a meeting to discuss LUF Round 3 and areas such as Active Travel.</p>
6.	<p>Update on activity relevant to Mid Wales</p> <p>6.1 AberInnovation – Mid Wales Challenge Launchpad Professor Rhian Hayward, CEO, AberInnovation and Luke Player, Innovation Strategy (delivery partner on the project). RH provided a brief background on the project which was funded by the UK CRF last year. AberInnovation led on the project, it is the innovation and enterprise campus and are collocated with Aberystwyth University. The first set of building have been established including a incubator building which supports start up companies and grow on businesses. The MW Innovation Led launchpad is closely connected to the Green Futures Innovation Park which AU have in the planning under the MW Growth Deal. AberInnovation is looking to run this type of project in the future to build the cluster of knowledge based businesses in Mid Wales. RH shared the presentation with the meeting and jointly presented it with Luke Player.</p> <p>QUESTIONS CM wished to congratulate RH as this project was highlighted as an example of good practice using public funds for challenge based approach in the UK Innovation Strategy that came out earlier today. It is a good indicator of success. CM worked on this project with the other stakeholders, but it is positive that something different was done in Mid Wales with skills builder based development. It is much needed in the region.</p> <p>6.2 WCVA – Strategic Developments Gail Dervish, WCVA (GD) shared the presentation and jointly presented it with Alun Jones, WCVA (AJ).</p> <p>WCVA is the overarching body that looks after voluntary organisations in Wales working together with nineteen County Voluntary Councils (CVC) and the Third Sector Partnership Council. The WCVA facilitates two meetings annually with Ministers and is a significant grant and loan funder to the sector. A grants team is still in position supporting Volunteering in Wales, Wales for Africa, local nature partnerships, Comic Relief and various projects. WCVA also works with sister partners in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland on wider policy issues.</p> <p>The presentation gave an overview of WCVA involvement in EU funding which will be shortly coming to an end. GD covered Active Inclusion and AJ will cover Social Investment Cymru.</p> <p>QUESTIONS Cllr BD thanked GD for the excellent work and support that is given to the voluntary sector by WCVA. The loss of EU funding is going to have a significant impact on the sector especially in rural areas. More conversations are needed to discuss the post Brexit support. GD suggested that any queries on this go through CM who can pass onto Matt Brown, Director for Mid Wales. CM is happy to pick up discussions after the meeting, it will also support the mapping work mentioned earlier.</p>

	<p>Cllr JC commented that the lack of funds affected Ceredigion in a more significant way from Powys. Powys didn't access funds in the same way as Ceredigion. There is a huge value behind EU funds and the difference is has made. All the funds that are coming from SPF,CRF, LUF do not cover the EU funds previously received by organisations in the region. WCVA's work has developed both the volunteer sector and the third sector which are different in themselves. It has highlighted that everyone should engage with these sectors. The funding pots that are now available are going to be difficult for the small businesses and charity to benefit from. Asked if these concerns can be kept on the agenda with officers and councillors and appreciate honest and open conversations.</p> <p>ACTION: Presentations to be circulated to Partnership members after the meeting (BG).</p>
7.	<p>Any other business There was no further business.</p>
8.	<p>Dates of Future Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friday, 12th May 2023 • Tuesday, 18th September 2023 • Monday, 6th November 2023

