



Partneriaeth Sgiliau Rhanbarthol
Canolbarth Cymru
Mid Wales
Regional Skills Partnership

Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership Employment and Skills Plan

2022 – 2025





Contents	Page
<u>Foreword</u>	3
<u>Executive Summary</u>	4
<u>Welsh Government Policy</u>	7
<u>Key Sectors</u>	8
<u>Sector Employment and Skills Analysis</u>	9
<u>Logistics</u>	10
<u>Health and Social Care</u>	11
<u>Tourism and Leisure</u>	12
<u>Advanced Manufacturing</u>	13
<u>Agriculture</u>	14
<u>Food and Drink (production and sale)</u>	15
<u>Energy</u>	16
<u>Further Education Supply</u>	18
<u>Engagement with Businesses</u>	20
<u>Action Plan</u>	23
<u>Contact Details</u>	24

Foreword

Over the last three years there has been a significant change in the skills required by employers to drive forward their businesses in a post-pandemic world. It is more important than ever that we ensure people can gain the skills employers are looking for through our schools, colleges, universities, apprenticeships and work-based learning.

The Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership is able to facilitate the alignment of the learning and skills system with the needs of the local economy, businesses, and the wider needs of society. It plays a crucial role in identifying needs, analysing what's required and moving the system forward to address the gaps.

We are committed to driving forward regional economic growth in partnership and ensuring much-needed focus on the needs and opportunities of Mid Wales.

**- Councillor Bryan Davies, Leader of Ceredigion County Council and
Councillor James Gibson-Watt, Leader of Powys County Council**

Through engaging closely with businesses, giving them a voice to influence priorities for the region, this Plan addresses the importance of making strong connections between the local learning system and the skills needed across the region, so that we are creating the right conditions for a thriving workforce.

We believe this Plan identifies key sectors and skills, recognises employment priorities for the region and sets out the mechanism to create a more prosperous skills infrastructure for the region for the next 3 years and beyond.

- Adrian Watkins, Former RSP Chair



**Councillor Bryan Davies
Leader
Ceredigion County Council**



**Councillor James Gibson-Watt
Leader
Powys County Council**



**Adrian Watson
Former Chair
Mid Wales Regional
Skills Partnership**

Executive Summary

The Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership (RSP) is one of four regional skills partnerships in Wales working to drive investment in skills by developing responses based upon local and regional need. Working across the counties of Ceredigion and Powys, taking close consideration of the priorities of the Growing Mid Wales Partnership.

Primarily a business-led partnership, the RSP works 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.

Our vision is to align the public and private sectors to address the supply and demand issues for an effective agile workforce, with the appropriate skill level, to attract inward investment to Mid Wales and improve communication networks between sectors to understand and identify learning and career pathways into long term, appropriate employment for the citizens of Mid Wales.

Our mission

The RSP Board acts as a stakeholder group engaging and consulting with specific sectors, industries, and regions:

- To identify and respond to the needs of employers and learners across Mid Wales;
- To engage with employers, sectors, and stakeholders to identify current and future skills needs across the region and plan accordingly;
- To align activity to future demand and stimulate innovation through learning and employment;
- To enable an inclusive regional response to Welsh Government policy and initiatives;
- To align activity with the skills requirements of the Growing Mid Wales Partnership.

Our objectives

- To work with key stakeholders to identify skill requirements from the private sector in Mid Wales;
- Establish methodologies to identify future employment opportunities across all sectors;
- Establish a curriculum strategy group to align learning pathways and progression routes for all learners from KS4 / 5 into work-based learning training programmes / Further Education (FE) / Higher Education (HE) or a regional apprenticeship scheme or occupational schemes. Introduce Higher Education degree and masters courses aligned to the future skills agenda for employment opportunities in Mid Wales;
- Establish a regional apprenticeship scheme (including shared apprenticeships) that bridges and aligns public and private sectors which recognizes the transferability of skills;
- Produce innovative career guidance for all learners in Mid Wales to link learning and career pathways;
- Develop the concept of 'Centres of Excellence' in Mid Wales;
- Work with a range of partners to ensure opportunities for career-long support for upskilling the current workforce, including those in short term employment;
- All of the actions will be underpinned by a strong bilingual focus contributing, via the unique bilingual education system and workforce across Mid Wales, to the vision of a million Welsh speakers by 2050.



The development of the 3-year employment and skills plan has been led by the RSP in collaboration with businesses, training providers, education, Local Authorities and Welsh Government (WG).

The RSP Board members see their role as a partnership of member organisations to feed into the skills planning and report back to their organisations. The RSP disseminates relevant policy reports and resources and commissions data analysis to provide up to date information on skills needs and opportunities to help identify local skills priorities.

All FE and HE providers are actively engaged with the RSP. They are invited as members and asked to share skills intelligence with their networks. All are members of the Training Providers Cluster Group which is a sub-group of the RSP, meeting several times a year.

The broad geography of the Mid Wales region can present challenges when engaging with busy employers. To overcome this, the RSP connects with businesses through regular employment and skills surveys, established forums such as the Federation of Small Businesses, Mid Wales Manufacturing Group, LANTRA, other networks and the regular Growing Mid Wales newsletter that is disseminated electronically.

In August 2022 the RSP was featured as the main focus of the Growing Mid Wales newsletter and was a vehicle to aid in the recruitment of a business leader as the new RSP Board Chair and to promote the Employment and Skills Survey.



Growing Mid Wales Newsletter

August Update 2022

Welsh Government Policy



The work of the RSP enables an inclusive regional response to Welsh Government policy and initiatives. We align activity with the skills requirements of the Growing Mid Wales Partnership and co-operate strategically on behalf of stakeholders across Mid Wales including both Local Authorities.

In developing the Employment and Skills Plan, we continue to address key questions: what skills do employers require, what skills are they having difficulty finding in applicants and their current workforces, and what does the future look like in terms of skills needs?

The Mid Wales RSP is sighted on the latest policy developments and key priority areas:

- [Welsh Government: Programme for Government 2021 - 2026](#)
- [Stronger Fairer Greener Wales, A Plan for Employability and Skills \(2022\):Young Person's Guarantee](#)
- [Wellbeing and Future Generations Act 2015](#)
- [Net Zero – Carbon Budget 2021-2025](#)
- [The New National Curriculum](#)
- [Cymraeg 2050](#)
- [Digital 2030](#)
- [Aligning the Apprenticeship Model with the needs of the economy 2017](#)

Key Sectors

The RSP bridges the gap between education and regeneration in the hope of creating a strong and vibrant economy underpinned by innovation, growth, and a capable workforce.

Working with partners to explore opportunities to 're-skill', change careers, 'upskill' people in their existing employment, build an understanding of skills for the future and to identify skills gaps with employers and provide training opportunities such as work-based learning / apprenticeships / degrees and other qualifications such as BTEC, NVQ and GCSE/A level.

Primary evidence has been acquired through extensive industry engagement. Much of this evidence has been gathered via a survey disseminated electronically to the RSP's extensive employer database and network groups representing the following sectors:

- Skills and Employment
- Energy
- Transport and Logistics
- Agriculture, Food and Drink
- Health and Social Care
- Leisure, Tourism and Retail
- Digital
- Supporting Enterprise

These sectors have been deemed a priority as they each play a pivotal role in the economic landscape of the region. Their presence in terms of growth, employment capacity and monetary contribution to the economy, places them at the forefront of the RSP's efforts in supporting the economic recovery of the Mid Wales region.

Sector Employment and Skills Analysis



Lightcast (formerly Emsi Burning Glass) were commissioned to support the RSP in its development of the 3-year Employment and Skills Plan for the region.

To inform decision-making, the Sector Employment and Skills Analysis report draws together data from official datasets and Lightcast proprietary data on job postings to profile six sectors of interest to the Mid Wales RSP, namely: Advanced Manufacturing, Agriculture, Energy, Health and Care, Logistics and Tourism and Leisure.

Each of these sectors has been defined by grouping together a number of relevant four-digit industries as defined by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Standard Industry Classification.

For each of the sectors, the report looks at change in jobs over time and, using Lightcast model, it provides projections to 2025, to give an indication of the possible direction of growth for each sector based on past trends.

By using Lightcast staffing pattern matrix, the report then identifies the top 10 occupations (defined using the ONS Standard Occupation Classification) most relevant to each sector and presents information on current recruitment activity in each sector by looking at the number of job postings over time, key employers currently recruiting and the skills they require.

All the analyses have been carried out at the Mid Wales geography – which covers the local authorities of Powys and Ceredigion – and findings have been benchmarked against Wales and the United Kingdom average.

Logistics

The logistics sector covers all activities related to the overall process of managing how resources are acquired, stored and transported to their final destination. It includes freight transport activities, warehouse and storage activities, and postal activities.

Key Findings and Conclusions

The logistics sector accounts for 1,890 or 2.2% of all jobs in the Mid Wales region, a smaller share of jobs compared to the Welsh and UK averages of 3% and 4% respectively. Within Mid Wales, activity in the sector is particularly concentrated in Powys.

The sector is projected to continue its steady growth out to 2025, growing by a further 1.2% over the 3-year period.

Within the sector, the 'large goods vehicle drivers' occupation accounts for the largest number of jobs in the region followed by 'postal workers, mail sorters, messengers and couriers' and 'elementary storage occupations'. Job numbers in each of these occupations are however, projected to decline in the next 3 years.

In terms of recruitment activity, the sector has seen a sustained surge in demand since the latter half of 2021 when the economy began to emerge from the pandemic. Despite declining somewhat in recent months, demand remains at an elevated and stable level relative to its equivalent pre-pandemic figures.

The high employer demand for 'van and other large goods vehicle drivers' as well as general warehouse workers, is reflective of wider challenges in recruitment in this sector.

In terms of skills in demand within the logistics sector, 'communications', 'customer service' and 'loading and unloading' are the most desired common skills, while 'warehousing', 'forklift truck experience', 'service quality' and 'manual handling' are the most relevant specialised skills.

Low demand frequency for specific digital / software skills and their general nature suggests that these are less critical skills for the logistic sector.

Digital skills that are linked to logistic roles (such 'Apple IOS', 'Microsoft Outlook') are less technical than those required in other occupations, suggesting an advanced knowledge of digital skills may not necessarily be critical for current job postings relevant to the logistics sector of Mid Wales.

Health and Social Care

The 'Health and Social Care' sector relates to all activities that involve the delivery of medical, dental and residential care services to patients, including general practice, hospital services and dispensing chemists.

Key Findings and Conclusions

The health and social care sector accounts for 9,330 or 10.2% of all jobs in the Mid Wales region, a smaller share of jobs compared to the Welsh and UK averages of 15.2% and 14.3% respectively. Within Mid Wales, activity in the sector is particularly concentrated in Powys, although representative of overall workforce proportions in each region.

The number of jobs in the sector in the region has declined by 25% since 2015 with a further decline of 4.2% projected over the 3-year period, in contrast with wider UK trends.

Within the sector, the 'care workers and home carers' occupation accounts for the largest number of jobs in the region followed by 'nurses' and 'nursing auxiliaries and assistants'. Of these occupations, only job numbers for 'nursing auxiliaries and assistants' are projected to grow in the next 3 years.

In terms of recruitment activity, the sector has seen a sustained surge in demand since mid-2020. Despite declining somewhat in recent months, demand remains at an elevated level relative to its equivalent pre-pandemic figures.

The high employer demand for care workers as well as nursing staff, is reflective of wider sustained demand for this sector at the national level and the NHS is the key employer in the area.

In terms of skills in demand within the health and care sector, 'communications', 'Welsh language' and 'teaching' are the most desired common skills, while 'nursing', 'personal care', 'midwifery' and 'mental health' are the most relevant specialised skills.

Low demand frequency for specific digital / software skills suggests that these are less critical to the majority of roles currently advertised in relation to the health and social care sector.

Top digital skills that are most demanded in health and social care roles include basic software such as 'Microsoft Office' applications and 'eClinicalWorks (ECW)', an electronic medical record and practice management software. Given that these are less technical and frequent than skills required in other occupations, it suggests that an advanced knowledge of digital skills may not necessarily be essential for the majority of roles currently advertised in relation to the health and social care sector of Mid Wales.

Tourism and Leisure

'Tourism and Leisure' is a broad umbrella sector which encompasses all activities related to hospitality, entertainment and the visitor economy. This includes all accommodation services, food and beverage related activities, performing arts and amusements, and also cultural, natural and sporting attractions.

Key Findings and Conclusions

The tourism and leisure sector accounts for 10,350 or 11.8% of all jobs in the Mid Wales region, a larger share of jobs compared to the Welsh and UK averages of 9.8% and 8.6% respectively.

Within Mid Wales, while the majority of jobs are located in Powys, Ceredigion accounts for a disproportionate share when each region's relative size in terms of workforce population is taken into account.

The sector has been declining since the pandemic and this decline is affecting projections, showing the sector is projected to shrink by a further 2.3% by 2025.

Within the sector, the 'bar staff' occupation accounts for the largest number of jobs in the region followed by 'kitchen and catering assistants' and 'waiters and waitresses'.

In terms of recruitment activity, the sector has seen a sustained surge in demand since the latter half of 2021 when the economy began to emerge from the pandemic. Demand remains at an elevated level relative to its equivalent pre-pandemic figures and this trend may affect the growth trajectory of the sector going forward.

In terms of skills in demand within the tourism and leisure sector, 'customer service', 'communications' and 'cleanliness' are the most desired common skills, while 'restaurant operation', 'food safety and sanitation', 'cooking' and 'food preparation' are the most relevant specialised skills.

Low demand frequency for specific digital / software skills suggests that these are not critical to the majority of roles currently advertised in relation to the tourism and leisure sector.

Digital skills that are linked to tourism and leisure roles are predominantly basic software such as the various 'Microsoft Office' applications. Given that these skills are both less technical and more ubiquitous than the software skills required in other occupations, it suggests that an advanced knowledge of digital skills may not necessarily be essential for the majority of the roles currently advertised in relation to the tourism and leisure sector of Mid Wales.

Advanced Manufacturing

'Advanced Manufacturing' includes all manufacturing activities that involve the innovative and rapid transfer of science and technology into manufacturing products and processes, such as the manufacture of upstream and downstream chemical products, precision technology, metalworking technology, defence technology and production technology, among others.

Key Findings and Conclusions

The advanced manufacturing sector accounts for 870 or 1% of all jobs in the Mid Wales region, a smaller share of jobs compared to the Welsh and UK averages of 3.3% and 2.3% respectively. Within Mid Wales, Powys, accounts for a disproportionate share of the sector's jobs.

The sector is projected to continue its very gradual decline out to 2025, decreasing by a further 0.6% over the 3-year period.

Within this diverse sector, the 'assemblers (vehicles and metal goods)' occupation accounts for the largest number of jobs in the region followed by 'assemblers (electrical and electronic products)' and 'textile process operatives'. Of these occupations, only 'assemblers (vehicles and metal goods)', are projected to grow in the next 3 years, although absolute job numbers are small for each.

In terms of recruitment activity in Mid Wales, the sector has only recently returned close to its pre-pandemic levels, somewhat slower than elsewhere in the UK.

There is particularly high employer demand for 'quality assurance technicians', 'quality control engineers' and 'chemical scientists'.

In terms of skills in demand within the advanced manufacturing sector, 'communications', being 'detail oriented' and 'quality control' are the most desired common skills, while 'auditing', 'good manufacturing practices', 'corrective and preventative action (CAPA)' and 'quality management' are the most relevant specialised skills.

With respect to specific digital / software skills, the data suggests that these – especially programming skills – are useful to a significant number of roles in the advanced manufacturing sector.

The top digital skills that are linked to advanced manufacturing roles are 'Microsoft Office' and 'Microsoft Excel', alongside various programming languages such as 'SQL', 'Python', 'Ajax' and 'MATLAB' as well as knowledge of 'Applied Programming Interfaces' and some industry specific software programmes such as 'ChemDraw'.

Agriculture

The 'Agriculture' sector primarily comprises activities related to both crop and animal production as well as forestry activities. This sector also includes a number on ancillary support services to the agri-sector, such as veterinary activities, manufacture of prepared animal feeds and the manufacture and wholesale of specialised agri-machinery and supplies.

Key Findings and Conclusions

The agriculture sector accounts for 14,500 or 16.6% of all jobs in the Mid-Wales region, a significantly larger share of jobs compared to the Welsh and UK averages of 3.6% and 2% respectively.

Within Mid Wales, Powys accounts for the largest number of jobs in the sector although shares are broadly representative of overall workforce proportions in each region.

In Mid Wales, the number of jobs in the sector is projected to remain stable out to 2025, decreasing by just 0.3% over the 3-year period.

Within the sector, the 'farmers' occupation accounts for the largest number of jobs in the region followed by 'farm workers' and 'managers and proprietors in agriculture and horticulture'. Of these occupations, only 'farm workers', are projected to decline in the next 3 years.

In terms of recruitment activity, the total number of job postings in the sector is comparatively low when taking into consideration its size. This is due to the way recruitment activity is carried out in the sector – with fewer job postings posted online – rather than a reflection of low demand. That being said, demand for jobs in the sector is currently well above pre pandemic levels.

In terms of skills in demand within the agriculture sector occupations, 'management', 'communications', and being detailed oriented are the most desired common skills, while 'ecology', 'physical therapy', 'service quality' and 'warehousing' are the most relevant specialised skills.

With respect to specific digital / software skills, the geographic information software (GIS) appears to be in high demand for roles advertised in relation to the sector.

The top digital skills of value to occupations in the agriculture sector appear to be frequently linked with various software packages related to 'geographic information software' (GIS) – a computer system for capturing, storing, checking, and displaying data related to positions on Earth's surface – as well as 'Microsoft Office' applications.

Food and Drink (production and sale)

'Food and Drink' is a broad sector which encompasses all activities related to food and drink production as well as food and drink retail and wholesale trade. This includes the manufacture and processing of different foodstuffs, drink distillation, and specialised trade of these products, among its specific activities.

Key Findings and Conclusions

The food and drink sector accounts for 6.5% of all jobs in the Mid Wales region, the same share of jobs as the Welsh average and slightly more than the UK overall average of 5.9%. Within Mid Wales, activity in the sector is particularly concentrated in Powys, although representative of overall workforce proportions in each region.

The food and drink sector is projected to grow by just under 2% by 2025.

Relevant to the sector, the 'sales and retail assistants' occupation accounts for the largest number of jobs in the region followed by 'food, drink and tobacco process operatives' and 'retail cashiers and check-out operators'.

In terms of recruitment activity, the sector has seen a sustained surge in demand since the latter half of 2021 when the economy began to emerge from the pandemic. Demand remains at an elevated level relative to its equivalent pre-pandemic figures and this trend may affect the growth trajectory of the sector going forward.

In terms of skills in demand within the food and drink sector, 'customer service', 'sales', and 'communications' are the most desired common skills, while 'warehousing', 'merchandising', 'KPI's' and 'customer queries' are the most relevant specialised skills.

Low demand frequency for specific digital / software skills suggests that these are less critical to the majority of roles currently advertised in relation to the food and drink sector.

When they are required, the digital skills that are linked to food and drink roles are predominantly basic software such as the various 'Microsoft Office' applications, specifically 'Outlook' (email) and Apple iOS.

The 'Energy' sector includes all activities related to the production and supply of energy, including the manufacture, generation and distribution of relevant technology / machinery, services related to utilities and, specialised building services.

Key Findings and Conclusions

The energy sector accounts for 1,110 or 1.3% of all jobs in the Mid Wales region, a smaller share of jobs compared to the Welsh and UK averages of 2.2% and 2.1% respectively. Within Mid Wales, Powys accounts for the largest number of jobs in the sector although shares are broadly representative of overall workforce proportions in each region.

In Mid Wales, the number of jobs in the sector is projected to decline out to 2025, decreasing by 9.7% over the 3-year period.

Within the sector, the 'electricians and electrical fitters' occupation accounts for the largest number of jobs in the region followed by 'plumbers and heating and ventilating engineers' and 'electrical and electronic trades not elsewhere classified'. Of these occupations, only 'electricians and electrical fitters', are projected to decline in the next 3 years.

In terms of recruitment activity, unlike other sectors of the economy, employer demand for labour in energy-related roles has not dramatically exceeded pre-pandemic levels. Mid Wales is also different compared to the wider UK, in this sense.

In terms of occupational recruitment, there is particularly high employer demand for 'electricians and electrical fitters' as well as 'plumbers and heating and ventilating engineers'.

In terms of skills in demand within the energy sector occupations, 'customer service', 'communications' and 'management' are the most desired common skills, while 'electrical engineering', 'electrical wiring', 'maintenance engineering' and 'machinery' are the most relevant specialised skills.

With respect to specific digital / software skills, the data suggests that these – especially those relating to circuit programming and configuration – are useful to a number of roles advertised in relation to the energy sector.

The top digital skills that are linked to energy roles are knowledge of 'Field-Programmable Gate Array (FPGA)' – an integrated circuit designed to be configured after manufacture – 'programmable logic controllers' and 'building management systems' – computer-based system that controls and monitors a building's mechanical and electrical equipment.

The majority of these skills are occupation specific suggesting that a knowledge of these types of digital and programming skills may be valuable for some roles in the energy sector of Mid Wales, particularly those relating to electrical and electronic based occupations as well as facilities management / maintenance.

Top digital skills requirements across sectors are more generally specialised skills:

- 'Apple IOS' and 'Microsoft' packages,
- 'eClinicalWorks' (ECW)
- Various programming languages such as 'SQL', 'Python', 'Ajax' and 'MATLAB' as well as knowledge of 'Applied Programming Interfaces' and some industry specific software programmes such as 'ChemDraw'.
- 'Geographic information software' (GIS)
- 'Field-Programmable Gate Array' (FPGA)

To support WG in their targets for Apprenticeships, Net Zero and Energy, NOS will be further explored to influence provision to meet the demands of businesses now and for future skills requirements. This includes development of new Apprenticeships.



Further Education Supply

The data on FE achievements has been provided by WG at a 2-tier sector subject area (SSA), for the period 2020/21.

[1] These achievements relate to learner domicile. More specifically, the figures relate to the number of people usually resident in Mid Wales who completed an FE course in 2020/21, but not necessarily where the course was completed, nor where they may now be employed geographically subsequent to completing their respective courses. Additionally, it is worth highlighting that these achievements are not specified in terms of full-time equivalence but rather include all achievements by learners irrespective of learning time.

From a demand perspective, average annual job openings are the most suitable indicator of local labour market need because it takes into account of not only net changes in job numbers over time, but also typical labour churn within the sector.

In 2021, 12,080 learners from Mid Wales achieved a FE qualification, representing approximately 3.7% of total achievements completed in Wales.

In terms of share of total Welsh achievements, it accounts for 4.5%, illustrative of the high level of provision for these courses across Wales.

In contrast, Mid Wales has a high proportion of agriculture achievements with 9.4% of all agriculture related achievements in Wales attributable to Mid Wales residents. This reflects the economic importance of occupations linked to the agricultural sector to the Mid Wales region at 16.4%.

With respect to the health and care sector, the data suggests that there may be a regional oversupply in terms of FE provision for both Mid Wales and Wales as whole compared to job openings. However, while this might appear to be the case, it may also be that, upon completion, learners have opted to work outside the region where there may be more employment opportunities in the healthcare sector.

Alternatively, learners may have chosen to work on a part-time basis (thereby only partly filling a job opening) or found work in a different, non-healthcare related, occupation.

This is similarly the case for both the advanced manufacturing and tourism and leisure sectors, which also show some signs of FE oversupply, albeit to a lesser degree. FE achievements may, in some instances, overstate the level of labour supply as they imply that all learners go on to work in that sector.

With respect to agriculture, despite accounting for a disproportionate share of all FE achievements, the data suggests that FE supply may be falling short of labour demand for the occupations linked to this sector in Mid Wales. For every FE achievement by Mid Wales learners related to agriculture there are almost twice as many projected job openings. This is a feature unique to Mid Wales, while in the wider Welsh context, demand and supply in the agriculture sector appear to be more balanced.

Potential undersupply of provision is also seen with regard to the logistics sector which also has a very high job opening to FE achievement ratio.

In both cases however, it is worth bearing in mind that many of the relevant occupations linked to Agriculture and the Logistics sector may not typically require college certificates to gain employment. FE achievement data may underestimate the potential level of labour supply for these sectors.

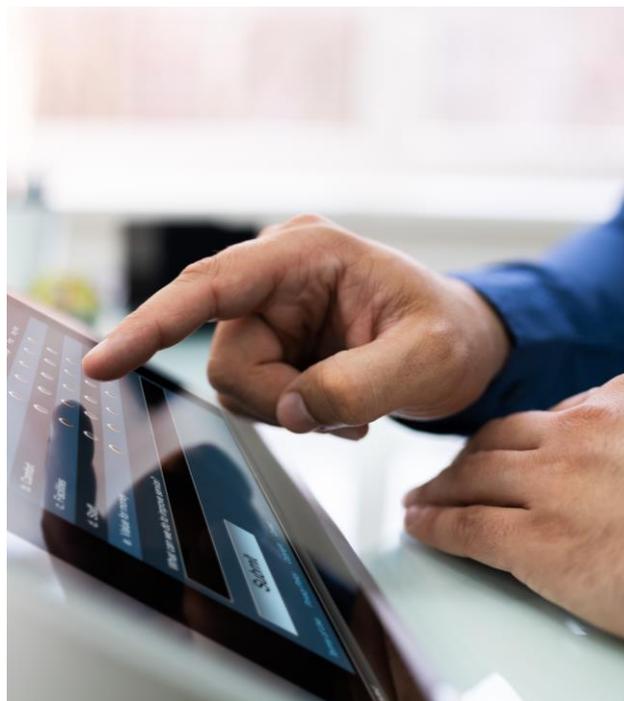
Engagement with Businesses

Since 2019, there has been a significant change in the skills required by industry to drive forward their businesses in a post pandemic world. The turbulent times over the last two years has meant that many new skills have been identified as a key requirement for businesses. Therefore, it is more important than ever that people can gain the right skills through colleges, universities, and work-based learning providers (apprenticeships).

The survey, conducted from 25th July 2022 to 9th September 2022, was advertised to businesses and stakeholders via external communications channels including press, email, regular social media posts, business forums, RSP Board members and internally to staff.

There were 69 respondents to the survey, one of which was through the medium of Welsh. The first three questions of the survey asked for name, company, email address and phone number.

Businesses who do face skills challenges or are more aware of their skills challenges are more likely to respond to surveys that will be used to inform skills solutions.



Key findings

- 73% of all respondents are based in the Powys area of Mid Wales.
- 34% of respondents identified as micro businesses (fewer than 10 employees), and 35% identified as either Medium (50 – 249 employees) or Large (more than 250 employees) businesses.
- The main challenges facing businesses are recruitment (72%), financial challenges (33%) staff retention (24%) and poor transportation links (21%) whilst 17% of businesses reported the impact of Brexit.
- When asked about recruitment, 62% of businesses reported that they planned to recruit in the next 12 months. 25% stated that they don't know if they will recruit or not.
- Staff retention is an issue for 42% of businesses. Businesses reported both 'geographic location' and 'not enough people interested in this type of work' (20%) as the main reasons for this issue. Businesses also reported yearly funding as a barrier to long term employment contracts.
- 29% of businesses say that new entrants to their workforce are not 'work-ready'. Reasons for this included missing skills such as Welsh Language, specific skills that employers are looking for (41%), desired level of work experience (39%) poor attitudes or low levels of motivation (33%).
- 'Associate professional and technical occupations' are reportedly experiencing the highest levels of skills challenges (35%) with 'skilled trade occupations' second (20%), 'professional occupations, sales and customer services', and 'administrative, secretarial, elementary occupations' joint third with 14%. 'Other' include 'qualified nurses / social care workers', 'childcare and play settings', 'PSV drivers' and 'culture, heritage and hospitality' occupations.

Key findings

- The most common skills challenges reported by businesses are communication (28%), and problem solving (22%) followed by advanced or specialist IT skills, knowledge of products & services offered by your organisation, and skills in new technology at 20%.
- For Net Zero, 12% of employers reported that they are currently, or are planning to, employ individuals whose role is aligned to the net zero agenda. These include energy consultants, infrastructure managers, trainers and assessors, retrofit coordinators and surveyors.
- Difficulty recruiting is stated by 48% of respondents.
- 37% of respondents reported workforce barriers to training, with lack of funds for the training / training is expensive (23%) as the top barrier. Can't spare staff time (16%) and a lack of good local training providers reported by 14% of respondents. This was supported by other comments including lack of provision, lack of appropriate training/qualifications in the subject areas needed and courses not flexible enough.
- 42% of respondents reported that they currently employ apprentices. Of the 58% of employers who don't employ apprentices, the main reason provided was that Apprenticeship frameworks do not meet business needs (19%). 'Other' included 'there are no apprenticeships available locally that suit our industry', 'not involved in HR planning', 'we are so busy we cannot dedicate the time to learners / training in house' and 'impossible to make use of people without advanced technical skills'.
- When asked 'at what level does your workforce need and use the Welsh language at work?' 20% of respondents reported 'all levels, dependant on job role' and 57% reported that there was 'no requirement for Welsh language'. Whilst 11% of respondents reported that they struggle to recruit people with the right level of Welsh Language.

Action Plan

In November 2021, the Chairs and the Partnership Managers of the four Regional Skills Partnerships met with the Minister for Economy. During the meeting the Minister asked the RSPs to suggest two or three challenge or opportunity areas / issues that they feel are particularly important for WG, RSPs or both to be focusing on, along with identification of the barriers and possible solutions. These can be found incorporated into the new Skills Action Plan.

- **Challenge 1** - A more responsive standards and frameworks development process, including NOS standards.
- **Challenge 2** - Recruitment challenges and demand for work experience.
- **Challenge 3** - Destination Journey for young people. Strengthen requirements for Mid Wales FEIs to produce destination data. (**NB** - Connects to Challenge 1 and 2 above)

The full Action Plan is available [online](#) as a separate pdf.





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