



E-NEWSLETTER Autumn 2019



RET Update

Welcome to the Autumn 2019 edition of our newsletter.

Following a busy summer, September has seen the team dive straight into the next series of our collaborative networks and events. A reminder that if you're delivering an EU funded project within the Cardiff Capital Region then please get in touch to learn how you can get involved.

With an eye on the future, we've included an update on the work of the Regional Investment in Wales Steering Group. SE RET Manager Lisa has been appointed to the Implementation and Delivery Sub-Group and if you have anything that you would like the RET to feed in via this group then please contact Lisa.Jones@bridgend.gov.uk

A huge thank you to everyone who contributed to the RET external evaluation process, we are anticipating some initial results shortly and the full report by the end of the year.



Whilst the team will continue to support regional delivery, over the next few months we will also start to focus on the regional

impact of the current programme. We hope to share the first of the short films we commissioned, highlighting the importance of collaboration and partnership working, within this next quarter and want to extend our thanks to those brave souls who worked with us and Orchard to pull it together.

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Future of regional investment in Wales

The Welsh Government is maintaining momentum in the development of a future investment framework in Wales so that there is no gap in investment to businesses, people and communities.

While this work is contingent on the Welsh Ministers' calls for full funding and autonomy to be met by the UK Government, on 18th July 2019 the Counsel General and Brexit Minister and Economy and Transport Minister made a joint statement about how

Welsh Government discussions with stakeholders across Wales have helped to inform the direction of travel recently agreed by Cabinet to steer further development work over the coming months. The key areas agreed by Cabinet cover priorities for future investment and a mix of national, regional and local delivery approaches, and will help ensure a consultation document can be launched in early 2020.

A web link to the statement can be found here <https://gov.wales/written-statement-update-future-regional-investment-wales-after-brex-it>.

CCR update



June saw The Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) Regional Cabinet announce the launch of the Investment and Intervention Framework which focusses on the regions three priorities; innovation, infrastructure, and challenge. The framework aims to build a delivery pipeline with partners, within and beyond the Cardiff Capital Region, while focusing on the priorities outlined in the Industrial and Economic Plan, which was launched in February.

The CCR Business Council travelled across the region in July to raise awareness of the CCR City Deal and its plan to support and work with a range of regional business of all sizes. Representatives of the business council hosted a number of business engagement events throughout South East

Wales to introduce the CCR City Deal to organisations and entrepreneurs and bring the CCR City Deal closer to companies within the region. The roadshow highlighted how the CCR City Deal and companies can collaborate and grow together as well as giving companies a clear idea of the opportunities the CCR City Deal have to offer and how these could benefit them.

August 1 marked the ratification of a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) which aims to deliver a coherent approach to improving transport across the South East Wales region. The Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and Welsh Government will work together to secure the £50 million South Wales Metro Plus programme of improvements and initiatives across south Wales, which will include private sector contributions. Also within the transport sector, July brought the announcement that Cardiff Central Station will receive £58 million in funding from the UK Government as part of plans to overhaul Wales' busiest station. This announcement followed on from the £40m pledged in January 2018 by CCR City Deal to support the redevelopment of Cardiff's main transport hub.

ASTUTE 2020

Working with the Manufacturing Industry Across Wales - Identifying and Exploiting Opportunities.

On the 23rd May, Lisa Jones presented at the Innovation & Skills for Manufacturing Roadshow jointly hosted by European Structural and Investment Fund operations [ASTUTE 2020](#), [METAL](#) and the [Materials and Manufacturing Academy \(M2A\)](#).

The roadshow informed attendees of the support that is available to upskill workforces,



to exploit opportunities for collaboration, and ultimately to gain competitive advantages through links with academia. The regional engagement teams are a key support network for ERDF and ESF projects, helping to highlight opportunities for collaboration within the regions.

With future manufacturing technologies being identified as a priority for the manufacturing sector to remain competitive; ASTUTE 2020's key message was that this is a critical time for identifying & exploiting existing opportunities and how, through demand-led, industry-academia collaborations with ASTUTE 2020, businesses can thrive and prosper.

ASTUTE 2020 supports greater levels of research, development and innovation within a variety of manufacturing sectors by strengthening knowledge and expertise to

improve efficiency and create higher-value goods and services aiming at driving productivity and growth within the manufacturing industry across Wales.

Testimony of this can be seen in the statement from Adam Glaznieks, Managing Director, [Hi-Lex Cable System Co. Ltd](#):

"We can confirm that Hi-Lex has had a very positive experience with ASTUTE. We did not have the correct skill sets at the time within Hi-Lex to solve a particular issue with a component used on handbrake cables for Ford. ASTUTE were able to support and subsequently resolve the issue. The best advert for their work is that the component design has been in use on all Ford B-platform vehicles produced in Europe since 2013 with zero warranty concerns".

Further case studies can be seen on the ASTUTE 2020 [website](#).

For more information on their diverse range of industrial collaborations and how they can support businesses that you work with, click on their [interactive map](#) or email at Info@astutewales.com



Regional performance

These are the latest available headline figures for the performance of the ESI funded operations within the SE Region. If you would like more detail on the data please email us at sewalesret@bridgend.gov.uk. At the moment it is not available on the [WEFO website](#).

Fund	Indicator	Figures for the SE region
ERDF	Enterprises assisted	2,815
	Enterprises created	686
	Jobs created	5,159
ESF	Participants assisted	87,502
	Participants supported into employment	8,794
	Participants gaining qualifications	36,038
	Participants in education / training	2,234

Regional staff workshop

On the 24th July Torfaen County Borough Council held a regional event for all staff members from the six joint beneficiaries working on the three ESF operations the local authority leads on. Over 100 team members from Bridges into Work, Working Skills for Adults and Nurture Equip Thrive attended the all-day event held just outside Cardiff.

The agenda for the day included a performance overview of the three operations and workshops on a wide range of topics including participant action planning, operational challenges and Cross Cutting Themes (CCT).

The workshops were interactive and gave both frontline and support staff the opportunity to share best practice, reflect on lessons learned, challenge perceptions, and plan new ways of working.

The cross cutting themes workshop provoked a particularly lively debate with project staff looking to capture more evidence of the CCT activity already taking place and embed other additional CCT support in all areas of operational delivery.

To date the three operations have engaged over 6000 participants and the overall aim of the day was to increase collaboration, knowledge and skills across the region to enable the teams to double the amount of participants supported to over 12,000 by the end of 2022.



Valleys Taskforce

The Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport has made a number of important announcements since our last Valleys taskforce update, including the publication of a [progress update](#).



In July, he announced the taskforce would build on the success of the Rhondda Cynon Taf “Empty Homes” initiative which offers applicants a grant to bring their empty homes back in to use. The taskforce are working closely with all local authorities within the Valleys taskforce boundary with the aim to open for applications for phase one of the programme next month.

Resulting from an Entrepreneurship workshop the Deputy Minister held in April, we worked with Hefin David AM, Business Wales and other partners to pilot a Local Business Surgery in Bargoed in June. Since then, the Deputy Minister has written to all valley AMs to offer to hold similar events in their constituencies. The events will start in the autumn and run until next year. The surgeries will provide an opportunity to engage and provide advice and support for entrepreneurs and businesses locally.

Transport is high on the list of priorities for the taskforce. During the initial round of taskforce engagement, access to regular, reliable and affordable transport was the number one issue. We have been working with Transport for Wales to host a series of community events across the valleys which

offer communities the opportunity to talk about local transport issues and stations. Venues and dates are in the attached flyer.



We have also funded a new out of hour’s bus service in partnership with the Department of Work and Pensions. The pilot was launched in May and will run for a year. It is designed to provide an affordable and reliable transport option for people working shift patterns.

The Taskforce is exploring a number of innovative schemes, including an Alumni programme. It is our ambition for every secondary school in the Valleys to have an Alumni - where former students can share their passion with today’s students, acting as role models and demonstrating the wide range of career paths available. The taskforce is bringing Head teachers from secondary schools across the Valleys where, together with representatives from industry and commerce, to hear about the good work that is already happening and discuss how it can be developed and expanded for the benefit of all pupils in the valleys.

Earlier this month the First Minister announced more than £6.6m which has been allocated to 11 Discovery Gateways across the Valleys, the sites will support the work of the Valleys Regional Park. Further details included in the following article.

If you would like to keep up to date with all of the Valleys Taskforce developments please follow us on [Facebook](#), [twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) @TalkValleys / #OurValleys.

Valleys Regional Park

11 Valleys parks and heritage sites named as Discovery Gateways, will share more than £6.6 million to maximise the potential of the area's natural and cultural assets.

First Minister Mark Drakeford and Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport, with responsibility for the Valleys Taskforce, Lee Waters, made the announcement during a visit to [Cefn Coed Mining Museum](#).



The museum will receive £1.8m of funding from the Valleys Taskforce in addition to more than £1.5m already committed by the Welsh Government. These funds will enable the development of an exemplar Discovery Gateway site for the Valleys Regional Park (VRP) reflecting the cultural, industrial and environmental heritage of the area.

Other Discovery Gateway improvements to benefit from investment include family accessible bike trails at [Dare Valley Country Park](#), and a new visitor centre at [Parc Penallta](#) providing a base for community focussed activities supporting economic and social well-being.

[Bryngarw Country Park](#), [Blaenavon World Heritage Centre](#), [Cyfarthfa Park](#), [Cwmcarn Forest Drive](#), [Caerphilly Castle](#), [Parc Brynbach](#), [Parc Slip](#) and [Ynysangharad War Memorial Park](#) will also receive funding to realise the ambitions of the VRP.

The aim of the VRP is to unlock and maximise the potential of the natural and

associated cultural heritage of the Valleys to generate social, economic and environmental benefits.

The investment in the Discovery Gateways is crucial to ensuring these sites have the capacity to provide safe and welcoming spaces that can be enjoyed by the local community and visitors from further afield. The sites will work together to ensure we make the most of the world class and diverse landscapes we have.

First Minister Mark Drakeford said: "I am very pleased Welsh Government support will enable (Discovery Gateways) to bring the area's history, culture and natural assets to life and I look forward to seeing these important projects progress for the benefit of the region."



Deputy Minister Lee Waters said: "These projects will put the VRP on the map nationally and internationally as a place which can inspire, excite and attract visitors from near and far. They will also provide opportunities for economic growth which is a key aim of the Valleys Taskforce.

"These plans have been developed through extensive engagement with Valleys communities and I look forward to continuing to work together to bring the VRP to life."

For further information on the projects receiving funding follow [@TalkValleys](#).

Tourism Attractor Destinations – Cwmcarn

Two new attractions were unveiled at [Cwmcarn Forest](#) by Deputy Minister for Culture Sport and Tourism, Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas AM at the beginning of July.



The tourist attraction, located in Caerphilly county borough, now boasts a brand new 'adventure hub' play area, which includes a climbing wall, slides and high orchard swings.

New luxury lodges have also been added to the site, in addition to Cwmcarn Forest's existing Visit Wales 4 star graded campsite and glamping pods. There are six new lodges, varying in size from comfortable 2 berths to spacious 6 bed holiday homes.

The adventure hub and lodges are part of the £4.6m ERDF-funded, Visit Wales led, Tourism Attractor Destination programme. Also part of the programme is the the Mon and Brecon Canal Adventure Triangle, which is being delivered by Caerphilly County Borough Council in partnership with Torfaen County Borough Council and Welsh Government.

Deputy Minister Lord Elis-Thomas, said: "Projects such this one are at the heart of our ambition to help Valleys communities celebrate and make the most of their natural resources and heritage.

"Our aim through the Tourism Attractor Destination programme is to focus efforts and investment on key projects in each region so we have a real impact on Wales' profile in this globally competitive market."

Future projects in the Caerphilly county borough will include further enhancements at Cwmcarn Forest, including new cycle trails, infrastructure works to the Crumlin arm of the [Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal](#), plus improvements to trails linking Twmbarlwm to West Torfaen.

