



E-NEWSLETTER Spring 2019



RET Update

Welcome to our Summer 2019 newsletter, we hope that you're finding our newsletters a useful tool in keeping on top of the latest regional developments, EU project delivery, best practice and funding opportunities.

We're always open to feedback on the service we provide, whether that's the regional networks, workshops, information events, newsletters, website etc. and now is the perfect opportunity for you to let us know your thoughts.

WEFO has appointed OB3 Research to undertake an evaluation of the Regional Engagement Teams (RETs).

As part of this evaluation they wish to capture feedback from those who've worked with the SE RET or accessed our services, including this newsletter. OB3 Research kindly ask that you please complete this short, confidential [web survey](#), which will also help us to plan our activities according to your future needs.

We look forward to the results of the survey, thanks in advance for your help.

Lisa, Amy, Natalie and Nicola

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Valleys Taskforce

The Valleys Taskforce have recently delivered a variety of engagement events which assist in providing advice and support for the foundational economy in the South Wales Valleys.



On the 13th June the Chair of the Valleys Taskforce, the Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport, Lee Waters AM, attended an event with Public Service Boards (PSBs) from across Wales. The event showcased the important opportunities available to the Welsh foundational economy, in particular the Foundational Economy Challenge Fund which formally opened on 15th May. The £3m fund will support innovative, experimental projects to help inform and develop future policy interventions. £1.5m of the fund is ring-fenced for projects in the Valleys Taskforce area. The event gave PSB's the opportunity to voice the type of support they feel is needed for a successful foundational economy as well as how to overcome potential barriers.

In addition to the PSB event, the Foundational Economy Challenge Fund has generated interest from a selection of experimental and innovative projects from across the region. The Welsh Government has held one-to-one meetings with a cross-section of public, third sector and private stakeholders to hear about the challenges and support available which can be enhanced by the Fund.

The Taskforce also piloted a business surgery on Bargoed High Street which provided an informal collaborative space for local business owners and entrepreneurs to come together and find out about the supportive services available. The surgery consisted of a marketplace of organisations who could assist local businesses with supportive strategies to help meet their business needs. The Welsh Government worked closely with Hefin David AM to organise this event and will be approaching other Assembly Members from the Valleys region to gauge the interest in holding similar events in other valleys communities throughout autumn 2019.

The Deputy Minister will deliver a statement in Plenary on the 16th July. The Statement will include information surrounding his priorities as Chair of the Taskforce and announcements for how he will take these forward. He will elaborate on these priorities on the 18th of July where he will be speaking at the SE Wales ESF Network's Information event in The Future Inn, Cardiff Bay.

Cross Cutting Themes

WEFO have developed some Cross Cutting Themes guidance for the new ESF Priority 5

Axis 5: Public Services Reform and Regional Working, which has been uploaded onto their Website. The guidance documents can be found [here](#).

Regional Performance

These are the latest available headline figures for the performance of the ESI funded operations within the SE Region. The data is available in more detail on the [WEFO website](#).

Fund	Indicator	Figures for the SE Region
ERDF	Enterprises assisted	2,623
	Enterprises created	686
	Jobs created	5,081
ESF	Participants assisted	82,173
	Participants supported into employment	7,295
	Participants gaining qualifications	33,958
	Participants in education / training	4,288

Future of Regional Investment in Wales

The Welsh Government is working with partners in Wales to produce new regional investment approaches to replace the EU Structural and Investment Funds after Brexit. The process of co-production involves a variety of engagement approaches, including the establishment of a Regional Investment for Wales Steering Group, chaired by Huw Irranca-Davies AM, to discuss strategic issues and new ideas about policy direction and implementation approaches, and provide advice to Welsh Ministers. Membership is from a wide range of stakeholders including business, local government, academic institutions, the third sector, and a variety of public bodies. The Steering Group has met twice (18 Feb and 2 May) since its establishment earlier this year. The membership, final papers and minutes are published [here](#).

The Steering Group has also agreed to the establishment of four specialist sub groups (National Framework; Research, Monitoring and Evaluation; Implementation; and International / Cross-Border Working) to inform thinking and generate ideas around specific issues. These groups will be

populated with relevant internal and external experts from different sectors, and will be established initially for 18 months as we seek to put in place a new regional investment framework from early 2021. Details on these sub groups, including how to apply to be a member are published [here](#).



The National Assembly for Wales debated in Plenary on 11 June the UK's Shared Prosperity Fund. There was clear support for the Welsh Government's positions that Wales should not be a penny worse off as a result of Brexit – as promised during the 2016 referendum campaign – and that the Welsh Government must retain autonomy in the development and delivery of successor arrangements. Read the Finance Minister's (Rebecca Evans AM) opening and closing statement along with the full record of proceedings [here](#).

Mapping the Social Business Sector in Wales

Social Business Wales, an ERDF Priority 2 operation managed and delivered by Wales Co-op, has just published its latest mapping report. This report presents the findings of the Social Business Sector in Wales – 2018 Census as the definitive account of social business activity in Wales. It follows similar exercises undertaken in 2016 and 2014 with the aim of providing an up-to-date outline of the state of the sector; including its size, composition and contribution to the Welsh economy and how it has changed in the last two years. The headline news is that the **social business sector in Wales has**

grown by 34% in three years, and is now worth £3.18 billion to the Welsh economy. You can download a copy of the executive summary [here](#).

WEFO have also published an infographic to highlight the sustainable development successes of the funding which can be found via the WEFO website the cross-cutting themes [guidance section](#).

Social Business Wales provides intensive, one-to-one support to businesses which have ambitions to grow with a viable business proposal. Their annual conference will be taking place on 25th September at Venue Cymru. Book your tickets [here](#) to find out how social businesses can be supported to grow.

Social Business in Wales

Providing business support across Wales to social enterprises and employee owned businesses with growth potential

- Using an Eco Code to encourage good sustainable development practice
- Enabling flexible working and increased awareness of equality in the workplace
- Created over 400 jobs in some of the most challenged communities in Wales
- Supporting existing staff through expansion and change
- Supporting businesses to develop their sustainable, development, equality & HR practices
- Helping organisations to save money through being green and reducing waste

Wales Cooperative Centre
Canolfan Cydweithredol Cymru

**Busnes | Business
Cymru | Wales**

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Cronfa Datblygu
Rhanbarthol Ewrop
European Regional
Development Fund

Digital Maturity Survey

Welsh businesses take on economic uncertainty with digital fitness

With economic uncertainty meaning flexibility is more important than ever, staying digitally fit can help you strengthen your business for the future. So, it is perhaps



unsurprising that last year saw more Welsh SMEs turn to technology in a move to sustain and grow their businesses while questions over Brexit continue.

Which technologies companies embrace and how these allow them to be resilient is becoming ever more apparent if you follow Cardiff Business School Welsh Economy Research Unit's [Digital Maturity Survey](#). The project has run for the last three years and retrospectively looks at what is going on across the Welsh digital landscape year on year, and Cardiff University has just revealed the 2018 findings.

The report illustrates how digital helps with the heavy lifting for business owners and staff alike by streamlining resources so firms can focus on growth. And increasingly the results are positive: Welsh businesses are more able to hire people, with twice as many SMEs reporting higher employment in 2018 than the previous year, and more than half of business using superfast broadband specifically increase their profits.

How digitally fit is Wales?

More Welsh SMEs than ever are using digital to sustain and grow their business, as firms from all sectors are seeing increasing evidence that moving online is

beneficial.

Digital fitness in Wales is driven from the North and the South East inwards to the Mid and West, where almost half of businesses now employ in-house specialists to help get them in shape. This reach goes beyond regions and into sectors, where there is a rise across the board in SMEs using online tools to manage specific parts of their business. For example, [Allen & Partners](#), a veterinary practice in Carmarthenshire, has already saved huge amounts of time for staff by installing a practice management system designed specifically for vets.



Traditional sectors in Wales are now embracing digital to better manage their business, with construction SMEs showing the highest increase in digital adoption in 2018.

Construction firms in Wales have ramped up their use of digital in the last year, with the number of businesses using websites, social media and specialist systems (such as accounting and project management software) all increasing. Construction firms have also discovered how to use digital to drive sales, with more than half selling online last year, 64% more than in 2017.

Four-in-five Welsh SMEs recognise the importance of digital in meeting customer requirements, with one-in-five already reaping the productivity benefits of CRM systems.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems give... *Continued on page 6*

Continued from page 5 ...businesses the ability to convert 'possible interest' into repeat business through a managed sales cycle. By keeping track of customers, firms can identify who to target and help grow their business. 20% of Welsh SMEs are already doing this, meaning there is a huge opportunity to get

ahead of competitors by turning customer relationships digital.

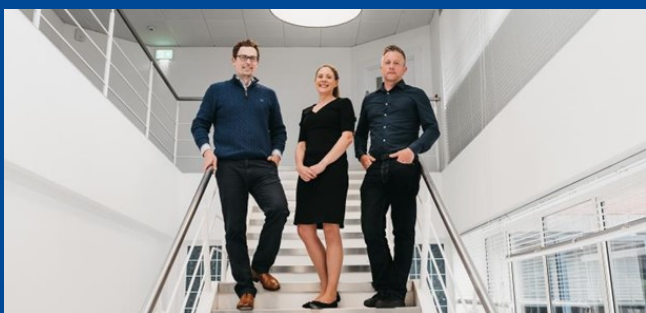
Further help for Welsh SMEs is available from [Superfast Business Wales](#), the free digital support service.

Cardiff based IT Support Company expands Following Development Bank of Wales Backing

b2b IT Services completes acquisition following investment from Development Bank of Wales.

As a result of the acquisition [b2b IT](#), which provides IT support, cloud solutions, business continuity and cyber security services, has added new technical roles and moved to new premises within the S4C Media Centre, Cardiff.

The funding came from the Wales Business Fund, which is part-funded by the ERDF, through the Welsh Government. It was created specifically to support business with fewer than 250 employees based in Wales and those willing to move here.



Founder Director, Luke Hodge comments "Our growth to date has been a direct result of the company's ability to understand each client and in turn their IT requirements. Providing excellent customer service has always been, and will continue to be, our number one priority."

b2b IT Director, John Hurst, highlights the business' acquisitive nature commenting "We are now in a position where we have a strong senior leadership team and key partnerships to pursue further acquisitions. Our move to the S4C Media Centre means we have state-of-the-art office space and facilities to expand."

Joanna Thomas, Investment Executive, Development Bank of Wales said: "b2b IT Services is a well-regarded business in the IT support space with a strong and diverse client base. Supporting capable and ambitious management teams like Luke and John is exactly why the development bank exists. We were pleased to make this investment to support this businesses acquisition which will help accelerate their growth and I wish them every success in their new premises."

The move puts b2b in a key location to access transport links and the M4.

John continues "The move will allow us to continue attracting and cultivating exceptional IT Professionals as well as focussing our business offering in South Wales and the West."

Rhidian Dafydd, Director of Projects from S4C comments "We are delighted to have b2b IT Services join us in one of our newly refurbished offices at the S4C Media Centre, Cardiff. The prime location of the Centre is attracting a variety of businesses such as b2b IT, opening up more opportunities for growth in and around Cardiff. We wish the team at b2b IT every success."

CCR Graduate Scheme



THE Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) launched its new graduate scheme in April to create more graduate opportunities with local businesses. The intention of the scheme is to enhance productivity, innovation and economic growth among businesses in South East Wales and promote the region as a destination for talented graduates.

£175,000 has been allocated for a one-year pilot of the scheme to provide targeted support for businesses to assist in creating an initial 50 graduate internships in 2019/2020. This includes the following FREE services:

- Advice on the contributions graduates can offer businesses (general and specific skills)
- Matching services to link businesses with graduates
- Help creating and advertising graduate vacancies
- Screening of application forms
- Running assessment centres

- A shortlist of candidates to interview

The scheme is marketed to students and graduates across the region in partnership with the University of South Wales, Cardiff University, Cardiff Metropolitan University and the Open University in Wales. The opportunity to participate on a coherent graduate scheme and undertake a fully funded qualification presents a strong opportunity to attract high-calibre graduates to businesses that are participating on the scheme.

Councillor Debbie Wilcox, Leader of Newport City Council and Cardiff Capital Region Cabinet Member for Skills said:

“As a region, we need to do better for our graduates. In order to raise productivity, we need to show highly-qualified graduates in Wales the opportunities available to them and highlight the investments that are being made in state-of-the art sectors. We look forward to working.. with our partners, that span academia and the private sector to promote and develop this scheme, and in the process enhance the region’s prosperity by improving skills.”

The new [website](#) for the scheme is already up and running and provides information about how businesses, and graduates, can get involved along with live graduate opportunities.

Working Wales: The new employability advice service for Wales

Working Wales was successfully launched by the Minister for Economy & Transport, Ken Skates AM on the 1st May at Careers Wales’ Cardiff Centre. It acts as an ‘independent broker’ providing employment-related advice and guidance to individuals and businesses. This service will also be the direct route into the Job Support Wales

(JSW) Programme once launched in April 2020. Qualified Careers Advisors will ensure that individuals are directed to the right place at the right time dependant on their needs, providing professional and personalised advice and guidance to identify and overcome barriers to progressing towards employment.

Careers Wales and the Welsh Government have given a number of presentations on Working Wales and the latest information on the Employability... **Continued on page 8**

Continued from page 7 ...Plan at our networks and there are currently a number of marketing campaigns inviting people to [#changeyourstory](#)



A procurement exercise will be initiated shortly for the new Welsh Government employability programme, **Job Support Wales**, with the intention to award contracts before the end of the year, delivering anticipated to commence April 2020.

The Job Support Wales programme will be delivered regionally, delivering on the following three areas.

The Job Support Wales Adult (JSW-A) strand will support unemployed and

economically inactive adults aged 18 and over to obtain employment. It will be responsive to individuals' needs to ensure adults receive the right support to enter employment.

The Job Support Wales Youth Training (JSW-T) strand will support young people motivated to work but who need improved employability skills, a clearer career focus and better job-related skills.

The Job Support Wales Youth Engagement (JSW-YE) strand will support young people who are 16 to 18 on entry and who have been assessed as having significant or multiple barriers preventing them from engaging sustainably in further education, employment: (including Apprenticeship) or training. Individuals will require more intensive, individualised and specialist support to allow them to progress and to become work-ready.

Working Wales: Stakeholder Engagement



Following the launch of Working Wales on 1st May ([Cardiff TV](#)), Careers Wales staff have continued to raise awareness of the service through successful marketing campaigns, including; T.V, radio and social media advertising.

To complement the aforementioned campaigns, a series of Working Wales 'pop up' events provided an opportunity for Working Wales staff to increase public

awareness of the service and provide an opportunity to deliver careers information, advice and guidance. The events were very successful, with over 600 meaningful conversations taking place with customers. in Cardiff, Caerphilly, Cwmbran, Newport and Pontypridd.



A key element of the Working Wales Stakeholder Engagement strategy is to ensure the continued attendance at stakeholder led events and delivery of services in partner premises and community outreach locations. **Continued on page 9**

Continued from page 8 ...A number of Careers Wales offices have invited local partners to visit the centres in order to; meet the delivery teams, further enhance good working relationships, provide updates on their current programmes and explore potential for



collaboration. The interactions have been extremely useful for all concerned and will continue to take place. Further information on collaboration and communication between stakeholders and partners is included in the regional Working Wales Stakeholder Engagement report, which was recently circulated at the SE RET facilitated workshop.

These quarterly SEM reports will be made available to partners.

In order for Working Wales staff to have a comprehensive understanding of all the existing support provision that may be of benefit to customers we are in the process of developing a Local Support Finder resource. The internal information tool will complement the existing Support Finder, (located on the [Working Wales site](#)) and ensure advisers ...have access to accurate, up to date information that will encourage effective signposting and referrals to other sources of help for customers. Thank you to those organisations that have already provided information on their provision, for those still to do so a copy of the Local Support Pro-forma is available from the [SE RET team](#).

Michael O'Keefe, Working Wales Stakeholder Engagement Manager South Region

Brexit & Our Land Consultation

Lesley Griffiths AM, Welsh Government Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs, made a statement on Tuesday 4th June about the results of the consultation, the text of which can be found [here](#) along with a Summary of Responses and the Welsh Government's Policy Response to the consultation exercise. The Welsh Government are proposing a Single Farm Sustainability Scheme to provide an income stream to farmers in return for delivering sustainable land management outcomes, such as water quality, biodiversity and animal health.

The Welsh Government will launch a consultation on their revised proposals, Brexit & Our Land 2, in early July prior to the



Royal Welsh Show. This second Consultation and process of co-designing the proposals with key partners and stakeholders is expected to last 16 weeks (until end of October).

The Welsh Government has also published documents relating to the **Geographical Vulnerabilities Project** in relation to this area of work, more information on this is available via the following links:

- [Land modelling maps](#)
- [Presentation](#)