



## RET update

There's been so much going on over this first quarter, Brexit, new programme announcements from Welsh Government, Brexit, the exciting launch of the Cardiff Capital Region's Industrial and Economic Plan and yet more Brexit developments, that it might be difficult to focus on the delivery of our EU funded programmes.

However, the team has been working hard to ensure momentum isn't lost across the region, hosting a number of partnership events. With Brexit lending more uncertainty to the Welsh economy and a renewed focus on employability, the team led a workshop for ESF project leads, Careers Wales and Welsh Government to explore opportunities, challenges and how we can best work together to maximise the benefits from Working Wales, the new employment advisory service. It was good to remind everyone that our ESF suite of projects will be delivering into 2023 and to discuss the importance of ongoing collaboration.

We've also seen the regional SME Competitiveness network go from strength to strength. The event in March, held at Welsh ICE in Caerphilly, brought together economic



development officers from all ten local authorities, Business Wales leads, Federation of Small Businesses and representatives from HE, FE and Careers Wales to share best practise with a focus this time on youth entrepreneurship.

If you are delivering an EU funded project across the Cardiff Capital Region and aren't involved in our networks yet, it's never too late so please get in touch, we'd love to hear from you.

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## Regional investment in Wales after Brexit

The Welsh Government is working with partners in Wales on accelerating the policy development process for successor arrangements for Structural Funds after Brexit that are designed in Wales and can be delivered from 2021 onwards. This includes the establishment of an external Regional Investment for Wales Steering Group, chaired by Huw Irranca-Davies AM, which is the national strategic mechanism for engagement with stakeholders, and will draw on the knowledge and experience in businesses, local authorities, academic institutions, the third sector and wider public sector across Wales to provide challenge and advice to the Welsh Government. The Group held its first meeting in Cardiff on 18 February, with the membership, papers and minutes to be published shortly on the [Welsh Government's web pages](#).

A two-year project with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

(OECD) is also underway to help inform new plans for regional investment in Wales after Brexit, as well as the implementation of the Economic Action Plan. The



internationally renowned body will use their extensive international experience of regional economic development to provide advice to the Welsh Government. The first part of 2019 involves a focus on analytical work and evidence gathering; there will be significant engagement opportunities for partners, including OECD study missions and seminars, during the project. More details about the OECD project can be found [here](#).

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## Working Wales: the new employability advice service for Wales

The Minister for Economy and Transport recently published a written statement on "The Employability Plan – One Year On". As previously communicated, a new employability programme procurement will be carried out to replace the five current programmes (ReAct, Jobs Growth Wales, Traineeships, Employability Skills Programme and Access). Job Support Wales, which is the new name given to the programme formerly known as Working

Wales will have three strands: Youth Engagement; Youth Training and Adult Programme Lots. Procurement for this programme will commence imminently. Where appropriate, the Welsh Government will extend contracts with providers for the continued delivery of legacy programmes until the new programme is procured.

Also the new employability advice service for Wales delivered by Careers Wales will be launched on 1 May and will now be called Working Wales. Further information on the launch of this service will be issued in April.

The full text of the Minister's statement can be found [here](#).

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## CCR City Deal

*The CCR Economic Growth Partnership (EGP) unveiled its Industrial and Economic Growth Plan for SE Wales before showcasing it at Wales Week in London. Frank Holmes, Chair of the CCR's EGP talks about its purpose and the need for showcasing it both within and outside Wales.*



“This plan is industry-led and developed by business leaders in the region. It highlights some of the economic productivity issues our region faces and endorses innovation-led, scalable projects necessary to generate sustainable growth and inclusive prosperity.

Building on the region's competitive advantage, the Plan targets sectors which will benefit from support to grow and flourish.

These include, but are not limited to:

- Compound Semiconductors and its supply chain
- AI, Data and Cyber Security
- Financial Technology
- Creative Economy
- Life Sciences - more specifically the medical devices and diagnostics subsectors.
- Transport Engineering – automotive, trains and aircraft

Another critical focus is reliable infrastructure that connects across and beyond the region. This means the Plan can support deprived and isolated communities that are currently poorly connected, and encourage regenerative growth.

Like any plan, its success will be determined by action and leadership, so it is critical that we generate visibility and influence outside of Wales. Our competition is both overseas and the other regions of the UK. Therefore, we're promoting and engaging with stakeholders further afield; selling our investable region to a wider audience.”

The full plan can be accessed on the [Cardiff Capital Region website](#).

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## Regional performance

These are the latest 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	2,401
	Enterprises created	686
	Jobs created	4,679
ESF	Participants assisted	81,166
	Participants supported into employment	7,278
	Participants gaining qualifications	33,881
	Participants in education / training	4,171

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## STEM Cymru2

The STEM Cymru2 operation run by EESW is designed to address the Priority Axis 3: Youth Employment and Attainment, with a focus on Specific Objective 3: To increase the take-up of and attainment levels in STEM subjects amongst 11-19 year olds.

There are five strands within the operation to encourage pupils to develop STEM skills in contexts that need innovative solutions to problems:

- Girls into STEM
- F1 in schools
- i2E Introduction to Engineering
- 6th Form Industry Project
- Headstart Cymru

The operation delivers a range of exciting STEM engagements and activities linked to industrial contexts. Participants will develop a range of skills that will allow them to be more flexible and adaptable and they will be more aware of the need for employability skills, while improving attainment through applying maths, science and technology knowledge in real contexts.

Some examples of the events that the project runs or helps pupils to engage with include:

### Team Tachyon at the F1 in Schools international final in Austin Texas.



The [F1 in Schools](#) competition involves teams of students designing and manufacturing CO2-powered model F1 racing cars using sophisticated computer

aided design software and computer aided manufacturing techniques (CAD/CAM). Teams compete for prestigious awards with the chance of representing Wales at the National and World Finals.

### South Wales Big Bang, Parc y Scarlets 2018



### 6<sup>th</sup> Form Student of the Year Awards 2018



The EESW Student of the Year Award is a celebration of the students who participated in the EESW Sixth Form Project last year, in memory of Dr Tom Parry Jones, entrepreneur, inventor, and trustee of the scheme for over 20 years.

Over 500 Year 12 students who participated in the scheme last year were invited to apply to become the EESW Student of the Year, the awards for which took place at the Welsh Automotive Forum's Annual Networking Dinner at the Vale Resort Hotel on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> November.

For more information on recent successes go to the [project website](#).

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## Technocamps

Part-funded by Europe through ESF Priority 3, the very successful Technocamps works to engage, motivate and inspire pupils to want to study STEM subjects at both GCSE and A Level. The aim is to encourage young people to take up computing in particular – at GCSE and beyond. In target schools which do not provide computing at GCSE, the support will create an environment which will encourage them to cater for the participants' ambitions. The operation also encourages the take up of non-computing STEM subjects through the use of workshops which employ computational solutions to problems arising from these other STEM subjects.



Technocamps recently headed to the Welsh Capital for the national finals of its annual coding competition - Game of Codes - hosted by Cardiff University. Pupils from across Wales were set the challenge to create a piece of software on the theme of Smart Cities. The judges were overwhelmed by the creativity, innovation and technical skills demonstrated by all the teams who entered, and by the exceptional quality of the presentations from all the schools who participated in the final.

Project Manager Julie Walters was pleased to be attending her first event since starting her role with Technocamps: *"It was amazing to see so much enthusiasm in the room and*

*such a diverse range of projects produced by all the pupils involved."*



The overall winner was Pontarddulais Comprehensive from Swansea. The school's innovative idea for a smart home app allows users to control lights, blinds and other household features, thus ensuring maximum environmental efficiency. IT teacher Mr. Lewis who supported the winning team was absolutely delighted with the result:

*"The pupils put so much effort into the project, regularly staying behind for two to three hours after school to develop their concepts. From a teacher's perspective, it was lovely to see a group of young, enthusiastic friends work together to develop an initial idea into a fully functioning prototype."*

Team member Evie Beck was similarly enthusiastic about the whole project:

*"We stayed after school, came in at lunch, and all our hard work paid off. It is an unbelievable feeling to know that the judges appreciated all the effort and time we put into the project."*

The national competition, now in its fourth year, has become established in some schools as part of their STEM enrichment programmes and we hope that it continues to grow and thrive in future years with many more schools taking part.

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## Valleys Taskforce

The Valleys Taskforce is delivering a coordinated approach to economic development across the Valleys, working closely with local authorities and other stakeholders. Following the recent changes in Government, the Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport, Lee Waters AM, has taken over as Chair of the Taskforce and is meeting with stakeholders, local authority leaders and Taskforce members individually to explore what our partners feel has been done well since the Taskforce was established and where they feel more focus is needed.



The Deputy Minister is particularly keen to renew the focus on the foundational economy going forward. A strong foundational economy is vital for Valleys communities and we want to create new opportunities across a range of sectors. We want to ensure that businesses, employers and individuals are

aware of the different types of support and opportunities available to them to boost their financial sustainability and that of their local and national economy. This includes improving awareness of career pathways, skills provision, employment practices and jobs and fair work opportunities.

With that in mind, the Deputy Minister has also expressed a desire to work more closely with secondary schools in the Valleys in a variety of ways – including linking schools with local businesses, building a network of role models for young people considering different career pathways and exploring how schools can be better utilised for the use of the community.

He is working closely with a range of Ministers to ensure the work of the Taskforce continues to be cross cutting in nature and to further encourage investment in the Valleys.



Finally, we are very excited about the work going on with the Valleys Regional Parks. The last month has seen a flurry of events with community groups and the feedback has been invaluable. We have now invited local authorities to bid for capital funding to support the development of Discovery Gateways so watch this space....

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## North-West Europe Interreg 9th call

The North West Europe Interreg programme (NWE) is looking for transnational cooperation initiatives that can deliver concrete results for the North-West Europe area.

The ninth call for project proposals is now open until the **14 June 2019**. The current call for proposals is only open to priority 1 and priority 3 of the NWE Programme. Each of these priorities has one specific objective. Transnational partnerships are therefore invited to submit their project application under one of these two following priorities:

### Priority 1: Innovation

Specific Objective 1: To enhance innovation performance of enterprises throughout NWE regions.

### Priority 3: Resource and materials efficiency

Specific Objective 5: To optimise (re)use of material and natural resources in NWE.

For support and further information on the call please visit the [NWE Interreg website](#).



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## Wales Rural Network interactive map

Wales Rural Network has produced a new interactive map of Wales' Local Action Groups and the Rural Development Plan projects that they are delivering. Over 400 LEADER projects have been published to date on the new interactive project pages, containing links to live web pages or feasibility studies.

You can see the map in more detail [here](#).



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