



E-NEWSLETTER Spring 2020



RET update

Welcome to the SE Wales newsletter, which we hope finds you safe and well.

The COVID – 19 pandemic sweeping the country is impacting on the way we all live and work, including the delivery of European funded projects. At this difficult time we want to keep our communications flowing as best we can and keep you informed on what's happening across the Cardiff Capital region. We'll be sending out bulletins and emails with relevant updates: as we have already seen the situation is evolving quickly. If you have news on the delivery of your operation, please let us know and we can help to distribute information more widely. The events and meetings that we had planned for spring have had to be postponed, but we will be looking at how we can take this work forward using alternative arrangements wherever possible.

The first few months of 2020 have certainly been a busy time. We've been working on completing our second film, and look forward to sharing it with you in a few weeks. The first round of ESF network meetings for 2020 took place before the coronavirus impacted too greatly, together with a hugely successful second meeting of the ERDF P1 & P3 operations. We also welcomed our new Finance and Information Officer, Karyn Curtis.

Best wishes to you all.

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WEFO update

In response to the extraordinary circumstances surrounding COVID-19, WEFO have put together specific [FAQ guidance](#) for structural fund operations. If you have any concerns or queries regarding the impact of coronavirus on the delivery of your operation, please contact your PDO, to ensure they can provide you with informed guidance and there is an appropriate audit trail in place.

Following the UK's exit from the EU at the end of January, WEFO have confirmed that the UK will continue to participate in EU programmes funded through the 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework under the terms of the Withdrawal Agreement.

This includes all European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIFs): the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) programmes,

the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF).

Therefore, there will be no changes to the existing arrangements of your current EU-funded project(s) through to the closure of the EU programmes in 2023. Projects should continue to use WEFO Online to submit and update information and all current aspects of managing projects remain, including:

- submission and payment of claims
- verification checks
- retention of relevant records

WEFO are particularly focused at this point in the programme on ensuring that operations are spending and drawing down as much ESI funding as they can.

You can also continue to bid for new funding under the current programmes.

More information is available [here](#).

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Views wanted on the future of Regional Investment in Wales after Brexit

The Welsh Government has launched a 12-week consultation on future regional investment in Wales outside of the EU.

The consultation covers a set of proposals for investing replacement funding from the UK Government to deliver inclusive growth across all parts of Wales, building on the evidence of what has worked well and lessons learned during 20 years of EU regional policy.

Developed with stakeholders across the public, private and third sectors, we are consulting on proposals that set out four priority investment areas (business productivity and competitiveness, reducing

income inequalities for people, healthier and more sustainable communities and the zero-carbon economy) and decentralises funding and decision-making closer to the people they aim to benefit.

The consultation can be found on the [Welsh Government website](#).

The consultation closing date is 22 May 2020.

The Welsh Government had planned to hold four consultation events across Wales during March and April, but given the unprecedented circumstances around the Coronavirus and to protect the health and safety of stakeholders and staff, these events have been cancelled. They will be sharing the presentations prepared for these events, and will also be exploring online interactive consultation activities in the coming weeks.

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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	2,401
	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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Valleys Taskforce

The floods caused by storms Ciara, Dennis and Jorge disproportionately impacted homes and businesses in the South Wales Valleys. The Welsh Government has announced a £10 million fund to provide assistance in repair and restoration across affected communities. If you or someone you know has been affected by the floods information on how to apply for immediate financial relief can be found [here](#).

In addition, the Welsh Government is making up to £2.5 million emergency funding available to support businesses severely impacted by floods. The Business Flood Relief Grant is available to support Small and Medium Enterprises with the immediate costs of recovery from damage and disruption caused by the storms. A sum of £2,500 is available per business to ensure that they remain solvent through disrupted trading periods. Details on eligibility and how to apply for the fund can be found [here](#).

In January 2020 the Taskforce held a speed-networking event for Valleys based

Foundational Economy Challenge Fund projects to help strengthen connections made and support collaboration within the Valleys.



In February, the Valleys Taskforce held a community wealth building event which demonstrated strong engagement from Valleys Public Service Boards (PSBs). A number of pilots will be taken forward by the Taskforce and discussions are currently taking place to establish the scope for these projects.

If you would like to know more about the Taskforce please follow them on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and Instagram @TalkValleys / #OurValleys or visit their [website](#).

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CCR Graduate Scheme

The Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) Graduate Scheme has proved to be a success in getting graduates and businesses 'future ready' throughout the Cardiff Capital Region. The aim of the CCR scheme is to connect learners and employers supporting our ambition to be a connected, competitive and resilient region where our brightest and best stay in the area and support our burgeoning workforce. After all, our region has over 70,000 students studying across our many universities.

We are a business growth programme focusing on enhancing productivity, innovation and economic growth while promoting the Region as a destination for talented graduates. With 57% of the workforce in Cardiff qualified to degree level and more than 32,000 enterprises based in Cardiff and 69% of the population of working age the CCR Graduate Scheme is essential in connecting the best in what the CCR has to offer.

What we are looking to avoid in the CCR is a 'brain drain', that is our qualified graduates leaving the Cardiff Capital Region and relocating to other parts of the UK. That is why our Graduate Scheme is so important as we locate our graduates into employment within the region which makes for a more prosperous region as whole. So far we have a successful turnaround from our first cohort as the majority of our recent placements have been offered full time employment and our third cohort of graduates have started training.

Feedback from the first cohort of employers whose graduates started with them in the Autumn:

- **87.50%** of Employers have offered or are looking to offer their Graduate further employment.

- **100%** of Employers said they would be interested in employing another Graduate through the CCR Graduate Scheme in the future.
- **100%** of Employers would recommend the CCR Graduate Scheme to other organisations or businesses.

If you would like to find out more from the graduates we have placed then read our [Case Studies](#).



We have launched a [website](#) where you can read a number of case studies from graduates we have successfully placed, spread the word on new graduate opportunities through the CCR [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#) where you will be able to see upcoming jobs, events, news and join our CCR graduate/employer community where we aim to connect the best of what our region has to offer.

If you would like to find out more about the Cardiff Capital Region Graduate Scheme we have a number of upcoming events that might interest you whether you are a business, a current student or a graduate.

It is clear that the Cardiff Capital Region is a great place to work and live and it is only going from strength to strength thanks to schemes such as this.

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Working Wales

The Working Wales service has continued to support customers through the delivery of careers advice and guidance. Alongside enhancing career management competencies, the process leads to the identification of customer's development needs and barriers. Signposting and referring to organisations that can provide the required expertise is an integral aspect of the guidance interaction.

Our commitment to ensuring we are enhancing our relationships with stakeholders continues. We have recently participated in a variety of partner organisations' conferences, including; Communities for Work/+, Active Inclusion and Inspire 2 Work. We also delivered a Skills Surgery, in collaboration with PaCE colleagues, in Cwmbran. This successful



joint event received extremely positive feedback from participating customers; see [article in News From Wales](#). We are eager to deliver further collaborative approaches with

partners.

From the inception of the Working Wales service to 29th February 2020 we have supported 30,117 adult customers across Wales, with 15,939 in South Wales. We have also engaged with 5,951 youth customers, with 3040 in South Wales.

As mentioned in previous editions of the SE RET Newsletter we are eager to support as many partner customer and stakeholder events as possible, with the South Wales teams attending over 30 events since November 1st 2019.

In addition to participating in stakeholder networks and working groups, we have also recently convened the Merthyr Partnership Forum. The aim of which is to bring together partner organisations from the Merthyr Tydfil area that have an interest in supporting people, primarily to enhance employability and skills. The meeting provides an opportunity for stakeholders to enhance professional relationships, update their knowledge on local provision and explore opportunities for collaboration.

We are looking forward to working with all our partners to ensure successful outcomes for customers.

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Horizon 2020

Horizon 2020 project delivery during COVID-19

Two new Horizon 2020 FAQs have been published: [Force Majeure](#) and [Extensions to Horizon 2020 calls](#).

Projects are advised to contact the Legal and Finance National contact Point NCP, [Stephen Alexander](#), with any further questions or concerns. Alternatively, you can also contact the [Horizon 2020 Mailbox](#).

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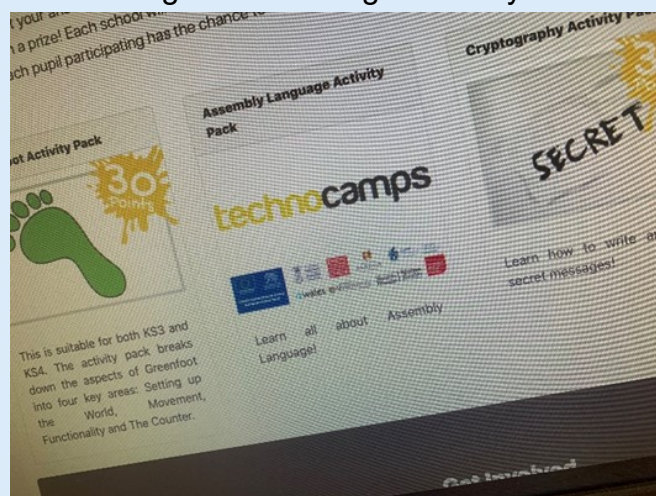
Technocamps Covid-19 resources for homeschool

Swansea University's Technocamps ESF project has launched a series of free online resources to support pupils, teachers and parents amid the Covid-19 outbreak.

With schools across Wales and the UK closed until further notice due to the ongoing pandemic, the Technocamps delivery team have created several tools to maintain momentum and motivation.

Staff started with a 'virtual code club' via an online video stream, which helped opened up access to children who wouldn't usually be able to attend the clubs in person.

There is a plan to go live every Thursday throughout this ongoing period, with the team also looking at introducing other days too.



Amongst the other free online resources are worksheets, videos and quizzes and pupils are encouraged to work through the packs and submit their work to the project team, who are also running an online leaderboard for both schools and pupils.

Pupils are encouraged to work through the packs and submit their work to the team. They will then be added to our Technocamps leaderboard with a chance to win a Sphero



robot for their school as well as a £50 Amazon voucher for the top student.

Professor Faron Moller, Technocamps Director and Professor of Computer Science at Swansea University said:

"During such an uncertain time, providing online based activities to learners across Wales and indeed the rest of the world is more imperative than ever. The Technocamps team have worked full-time following the closure of schools to ensure that engaging, inspiring and interactive resources have been made available through our website."

Stewart Powell, Technocamps Operations Manager said:

"I am extremely pleased with the initial engagement we have had from teachers and parents alike who are already encouraging their pupils and children to interact. Currently, there are four different topics available, including assembly coding through Little Man Computer as well as exploring different ciphers as a part of our Cryptography activity pack.

In the coming days and weeks, we will add a variety of new activities which can be completed to earn more points allow students to take part in our school and individual leaderboards."

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State of the Nation

Chwarae Teg have published their [2020 State of the Nation report](#), outlining how Wales is progressing towards achieving Gender Equality in Wales.

The report highlighted that the gender pay gap in Wales has risen to 14.5%, with some areas as high 26%, while the UK figure has decreased. Further evidence shows women are more effected by economic deprivation, as 90% of single parents are women, and single parent households are at the greatest risk of poverty with 44% living in poverty.

The report, which followed the completion of the Gender Equality Review, was launched at an event in Community House, Newport, with the range of gender equality indictors explained by a series of speakers.

These indicators are grouped under three main themes, which are the key strategic focus for Chwarae Teg's work:

1. **Women in the Economy:** building a Wales where women achieve and prosper across all sectors and at all levels of the economy
2. **Women Represented:** building a Wales where women are visible and influential

across all sectors of the economy, society and in public life

3. **Women at Risk:** building a Wales where women are empowered to achieve their potential, regardless of their background, social status or geographic location

A panel with representatives from Oxfam Cymru, EYST and Disability Wales discussed the findings and a question and answer session was held to give the audience the opportunity to find out more. The afternoon provided delegates with an opportunity to reflect on the research and discuss how to tackle poverty among women in Wales.

Welsh Government has accepted the recommendations in the Gender Equality review to make Wales a world leader for gender equality. The review sets out an ambitious programme for long term change in how Welsh Government develops, delivers and evaluates policies and programmes.

Wide – ranging action is needed to address the inequalities faced by women with caring responsibilities, poverty, abuse and harassment.



New team for Valleys Regional Park

Three new members have joined Phil Lewis on the Valleys Regional Park team, reconnecting people with the landscape using a regional partnership approach.



Ecologist Dan Locke comes to the team from Bryngarw Country Park and is also a

freelance consultant. Moving over from Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, Mari Lowe has a strong track record in the cultural sector and in partnership working. With a rich portfolio in community development and public health, Julie Davies joins the team bringing a wealth of experience.

Getting to know the people 'on the ground' has been a priority for the new team, familiarising themselves with the eleven sites which will collectively receive £7 million investment. Called Discovery Gateways, the sites act as hubs in the landscape where people can explore the natural and cultural heritage of the valleys.

Communications and marketing is being finalised with a website and social media on the way. Expect plenty of new digital content on landscape, wellbeing, and community. In the meantime, all of our partners are using the Twitter hashtag [#ValleysRegionalPark](#) so it's a great way to find out more.

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