



# E-NEWSLETTER

## Autumn 2020



## RET update

Welcome to our Autumn 2020 newsletter. This edition brings together key updates from our partners across the Cardiff Capital Region and a number of positive progress stories from EU funded projects. We are also pleased to share with you the second in our series of films, this one highlighting the work of our SME Competiveness Network and the suite of ERDF funded projects supporting businesses across the region; [you can view the film on our YouTube channel](#). If you'd like to get involved with our work then please don't hesitate to contact us, we'd love to hear from you.

Take care all

Lisa, Amy, Natalie and Karyn



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## Post-Brexit regional investment plans move forward

Plans for regional investment in Wales after Brexit took a step forward this month following the launch of the [OECD's report on regional economic development](#) on 17 September.

The report provides an independent and international best practice perspective on economic development in Wales and is the culmination of 18 months of research, analysis and policy dialogue dedicated to Welsh regional development and public investment.

The Welsh Government is now considering the recommendations of the report and will be discussing its findings with partners and stakeholders during the coming weeks.

Organisations across Wales have an opportunity to give their thoughts on the recommendations in the OECD report through a series of regionally focussed virtual events taking place between 28 September and 1 October.

The events will include contributions from the OECD, Welsh Government, City and Growth Deals and local leaders, and will



explore how the recommendations in the report can inform future approaches to regional development.

An independent report on the findings of the Welsh Government's consultation on future regional investment will also be published in the coming weeks. The consultation attracted a wide range of feedback from both organisations and citizens, and covered a set of proposals for investing replacement funding following the conclusion of EU regional policy in Wales.

For more information on regional investment in Wales after Brexit, visit: <https://gov.wales/regional-investment-wales-after-brexit>

## Deadline for Erasmus+ Key Action 2 Strategic Partnerships

[The European Commission has published a second corrigendum to the 2020 Programme Guide and a second corrigendum to the Erasmus+ 2020 Call for Proposals.](#)

The corrigenda relate to the introduction of new decentralised calls for Strategic Partnerships in response to COVID-19, with a deadline of 29 October 2020, 11am (UK time).



## WEFO update

In April, the European Union provided a package of flexibilities (Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative - CRII) for the use of European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds in response to the economic impacts of Covid-19.

WEFO has maximised the opportunities provided by CRII, by earmarking up to £245m of EU funds to support the second wave of the Economic Resilience Fund, including investment loans made by the Development Bank of Wales, and health service costs connected to Covid-19, in particular to support the recruitment of additional medical staff and purchases of PPE. The Covid-19

funding has been sourced primarily due to the shifts in the exchange rate, there will be no impact on the funding or delivery of existing EU structural funded projects within the current 2014-2020 programme.

Project managers are reminded to continue to deliver to agreed project milestones and to submit their claims in promptly. If you should experience any impact on the delivery of your structural fund project as a result of COVID-19, [updated advice and guidance on the effects of the coronavirus](#) is available on the website, please keep checking for the latest information. Please contact your Project Development Officer (PDO) in WEFO for any further advice.

## 3-SET Engagement survey

Wavehill are undertaking an evaluation of 3-SET and their activities to assess the performance of 3-SET, the impact of their activities and also to support and inform future planning.

They are interested in your views, regardless of whether you have engaged with 3-SET or not.

We would like to invite you to [contribute to the evaluation by responding to the survey via this link](#).



## 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](mailto:sewalesret@bridgend.gov.uk).

Fund	Indicator	Figures for the SE Region
ERDF	Enterprises assisted	4,187
	Enterprises created	1,351
	Jobs created	7,770
ESF	Participants assisted	111,774
	Participants supported into employment	13,382
	Participants gaining qualifications	49,763
	Participants in education / training	2,998

## CCR update

Despite it being holiday season there has been no let-up in activity in the Cardiff Capital Region.

Some of the highlights over the summer months include:

- Being awarded £25.4m for our bid for CS Connected, a major project within the Compound Semiconductor Cluster, from the UK Research and Innovation's Strength in Places Fund. This amounts to more than half the £43.7m project cost, is a huge boost to the Cardiff Capital Region and reinforces our strategic focus on compound semiconductors.



- Advancing a £2 million loan to Creo Medical to develop its Cool Plasma technology which could provide a valuable weapon in the fight against Covid-19. The loan is part of CCR's response to the global emergency caused by the coronavirus and fits in with our strategy of investing in innovative companies in the medical devices and diagnostics sector, identified as one of the priority sectors for the region.



- Producing a new podcast series with Business News Wales featuring a series of interviews with a selection of senior leaders from across our Regional cabinet, RTA, Skills Partnership, Economic Growth Partnership and from our own team outlining a new phase of activity – from lockdown to scaling up for delivery- and the key areas of focus across the region.



- Enhancing the CCR graduate proposition with benefits to include business mentoring services in conjunction with GobaWelsh and launching a focused B2B campaign to assist businesses recruit within the Life Sciences, Technology and Manufacturing sectors.
- Launching a brand new £10m challenge fund project. Subject to final cabinet approval of its business case its aim is to contribute to rebuilding our local economy and produce innovative solutions to deep-seated societal problems, such as decarbonisation of transport and improvements in social care. It will provide opportunities to small businesses in our foundational economy, helping to stimulate a sustainable recovery post-Covid and build resilient communities.

For more detail on all these developments visit <https://www.cardiffcapitalregion.wales/news/>

## Valleys Taskforce

Whilst the Taskforce will continue to work to deliver all the actions included in Our Valleys, Our Future: Delivery Plan, it has been important to adapt and respond to the impact of COVID-19.

### Transforming Towns



In July, Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport Lee Waters (Chair of the Valleys taskforce) announced £3.7m to support and enhance the Transforming Towns offer in the Valleys region. Funding will be specifically targeted at smaller town centres in the Valleys region and will focus on responding to the impact of coronavirus, including supporting communities to work closer to home and active travel. An announcement on the detail of this funding will be made in the autumn.

### Empty Homes Grant

The Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport set aside £10m for the Valleys Taskforce Empty Homes Grant across the Valleys Taskforce area. This scheme provides an opportunity to access affordable housing, will return empty properties into use, help regenerate communities, and provide more choice and suitable accommodation for residents.

The pilot is being delivered in a two phase approach. Phase one became operational

in October 2019 and ran until 31 March 2020. Over 400 applications were approved during phase one.

The Valleys Taskforce worked with stakeholders to further strengthen the scheme for phase two. In addition to bringing homes back in to use, the scheme will support the decarbonisation agenda through benefits to applicants for using more energy efficiency measures on their properties. It will also continue to support and strengthen the foundational economy, by ensuring local businesses are engaged and benefiting from the renovation works. Phase two will also allow empty properties to be brought in to use for social housing by Registered Social Landlords.

Due to the Covid 19 crisis the roll out for phase two was put on hold. The scheme re-opened for applications at the end of July 2020 for those local authorities that have signed up. As at 11 September, nearly 250 applications are being processed as part of phase two, across those local authorities.



### Next Steps

Over the next 6 months we will be focussing on evaluating the impact of the Valleys Taskforce since 2016. A full update of all of the Valleys taskforce priorities will be published later in the autumn.

## First virtual ESF information event

The SE RET held their first virtual event on 29th September and were very pleased (and relieved!) that all went well and without any technical hitches! The on-line format allowed us to host a greater number of delegates than our usual events, enabling project managers from both ERDF and ESF funded projects to attend. Attendees were able to select the briefing sessions of their choice throughout the day, and had the opportunity to ask questions of the presenters.

The sessions on offer and the presenters were:

- WEFO Update: Sue Price, WEFO
- Employability Plan Update: Edwyn Williams and Louise Brown, Welsh Government
- Regional Investment in Wales: Rachel

Garside – Jones and Alison Sandford, WEFO

- Work and Health Programme Wales Update: Drew Smith, Remploy
- CCR City Deal and Skills Board Update: Leigh Hughes, CCR Skills Board
- Potential impact of COVID-19 in Wales and the Youth Opportunities Index: David Hagendyk, Learning and Work Institute (LWI)
- City Deal Update: Nic Sommerville – Office of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal
- Open University: Sarah Roberts, Open University

The presenters focused their briefings on how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on the Cardiff Capital Region and what actions are underway to help the recovery. We'll be offering another Information Event in 2021.

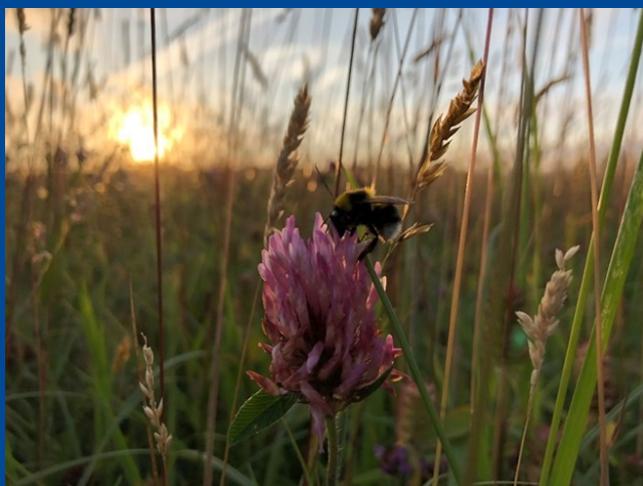
## Valleys Regional Park



The new Valleys Regional Park website was launched at the end of August. Residents, visitors and local businesses are now able to find out more about what they can see and do across the Valleys.

Phil Lewis who is leading on Valleys Regional Park said: "Using a whole valleys approach, the Valleys Regional Park is here to promote and celebrate the restoring of our valleys landscape, making sure we bring together the health of the land, people and the economy in everything that we do. This new website will help us to do that."

The new website includes a map of the region with information provided on the Discovery Gateway sites which then link through to the relevant site's main website. In addition to activities and events taking place, volunteering opportunities will also be listed. In addition to promoting the Valleys as a destination, the Valleys Regional Park also involves encouraging partners to work towards best practice in landscape management to help improve biodiversity.



## Interreg NWE

[Interreg NWE will launch its second call for capitalisation initiatives in mid-October 2020.](#)

“Maximising project impact” targets existing

projects which have a solid ground for additional activities and where continuation of cooperation brings significant added value.

### ERDF project news: RCT infrastructure developments

#### Coed Ely

The aim of the ERDF funded project at



Coed Ely is to increase employment through investment in infrastructure, helping to stimulate growth and provide improved business provision at a strategic employment site. This will act as a catalyst for further development and investment at this site and the surrounding area.

Contractors continue to make steady progress on site. The external wall cladding is almost complete and the drainage system has been completed, with only connection to the ACO drains remaining. The main warehouse floor is now in place, with internal block walls almost finished. The lift shaft structure has been erected in readiness for lift installation. The curtain walling glazing installation, to the front offices and building entrance, is well progressed and internal stud walls are being erected, along with 1<sup>st</sup> fix M & E works being underway. An updated construction programme gives an estimated building handover date of 7<sup>th</sup> December 2020.

#### Llys Cadwyn

Llys Cadwyn is Rhondda Cynon Taf Council’s flagship regeneration project

located at the northern gateway to Pontypridd Town Centre on the site former 1960s Taff Vale Shopping Centre.

This exciting development demonstrates the Council’s ambitious drive to regenerate the town by taking control of key vacant or derelict sites and premises and attracting hundreds of jobs, increasing footfall and creating an environment where people are proud to live, work and play.

The 14,693m<sup>2</sup> development has received financial support from ERDF through Welsh Government’s Building for the Future Programme.

The mixed-use development incorporates three buildings of which two are predominantly Grade A office accommodation with café/restaurant units for let on the ground floors and a third at the northern end of the site which is a Community Hub incorporating a 21<sup>st</sup> Century library, access to Council services, community facilities, state of the art gym/leisure studios and café. The development also comprises two new landscaped pedestrian streets and a new riverside walkway above a basement housing car parking and plant rooms.



## ERDF project news: new industrial units in Caerphilly Borough.

### A trio of industrial buildings set to bring new businesses to Rhymney



On site works are now underway at one of Caerphilly County Borough Council's exciting new business developments - Silver Birch Court, The Lawns Industrial Estate in Rhymney. Just 2 miles south of the A465 Heads of The Valleys road, with excellent links to the M4 and just an hour's drive from the M50. Rhymney Railway Station links directly to Cardiff Central with a journey time of one hour.

The site, which currently hosts a number of existing units, will welcome three new

buildings of fifteen individual units. Units are available to lease from Caerphilly County Borough Council and will consist of eight 50m<sup>2</sup> units, four 75m<sup>2</sup> units and three 98m<sup>2</sup> units. It is anticipated that the units will be available for occupation by the end of 2020.

Further information on the high quality business units will be placed on Caerphilly County Borough Council's Property Website at the end of the year, together with rental information and expressions of interest can be submitted then.

Welsh construction and civil engineering company EnCon Construction Ltd. have been commissioned to extend the current land in Rhymney into high quality, light industrial factory units as part of the investment in infrastructure in the South East Wales region. This project has been made possible with funding from Caerphilly County Borough Council and ERDF through Welsh Government. The **£2.9m** project is a much welcomed boost to the local economy with the prospect of employment for local people.

To view property accommodation availability within the County Borough of Caerphilly [visit Caerphilly CBC property website](#). Register online for automatic email alerts when new properties are added.



## ERDF project news: AgorIP

The AgorIP Project which has helped the Welsh economy and innovation in west Wales to prosper over the last four years, has been extended to benefit all of Wales, with a total investment of more than £20m.

AgorIP brings academics, clinicians and businesses together to pioneer research into cutting-edge technologies and drive commercial success with the support of Swansea University, and the European Regional Development Fund through the Welsh Government.

Since the AgorIP Project was launched, the Team working in West Wales and the Valleys, including North Wales, has assisted more than 200 opportunities; helping to create jobs, protect Intellectual Property (IP) and bring innovation to the marketplace. The Project has also helped companies to spin out of Swansea University by securing private investments.

Of these, around half have been related to health and wellbeing, which goes towards AgorIP's overall aim of improving the health, wellbeing and economy of Wales as a whole.

As well as working with academics and businesses, the AgorIP Project is working closely with NHS Wales to find innovation directly from within the NHS which can improve existing technologies and medicine.

The Project currently has three secondees working within Hywel Dda and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Boards to seek these out on AgorIP's behalf.

AgorIP has helped to bring a range of innovation to the marketplace; including novel collagen production, mountain bikes accessible to wheelchair users, innovation bringing virtual reality to classrooms, nutrition bars using locally sourced seaweed



in north Wales, novel protective face masks in response to the Covid-19 crisis, and metal coatings to name but a few.

The extension means that the Project will now run until June 2023, with funding of more than £15m assigned to west Wales, and nearly £5m assigned to east Wales thanks to Swansea University, the Welsh Government and EU funds.

Health Minister Vaughan Gething said: “The AgorIP project is full of examples where science and healthcare are working together at the forefront of clinical innovation.

“I’m pleased we can continue to support the NHS working confidently with university and industry partners, linking better health technologies and services to economic growth opportunities in Wales.”

Ceri Jones, Interim Director of AgorIP, said: “We are delighted with the additional investment to support the expansion of AgorIP in West Wales and the Valleys and also the growth of our provision into South East Wales.

“It’s a tribute to the hardworking Project team at Swansea University and with the health boards that we have secured this enhanced investment, which will enable us to deliver significantly more high value impacts and outputs for the benefit of university, industrial and NHS research development in Wales.”