

north wales economic ambition board
bwrdd uchelgais economaidd gogledd cymru

REGIONAL SKILLS PARTNERSHIP – NORTH WALES
ANNUAL REPORT 2018

The following sections are in response to the guidance from Welsh Government setting out the requirements for the report, and content specified for inclusion within a document stated as having to be around 30 pages in length.

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Section 1: Introduction

The Regional Skills Partnership in North Wales continues to have a clear aim to support delivery partners on our regional economic opportunities, and raising ambitions within all cohorts of our future and current labour market, primarily in support of the North Wales Growth Vision.

Delivering on part of this Vision for our region, is the North Wales Growth Deal, which is currently being developed in detail to further promote 5,000 new jobs in the region, through a Bid which is collectively worth £1.3billion.

The current list of project proposals which regional partners are actively engaged in and leading, will not all go forward to be a part of the Bid. However, projects not funded via the growth deal that promote skills and employment developments, may be matched to other UK and Welsh Government funding streams in the future; including the proposed shared prosperity fund to replace EU Structural Funding.

Challenges highlighted within the 2017 Plan for our region, still remain, but with promotion and more detailed analysis, are being addressed over the short and longer term. These include issues concerning replacement demand of current aging cohorts within the workforce; the replacement demand of skills in response to projected labour movements aligned to major employment opportunities; addressing the retention of higher level skills within the region; and supporting the counter balance of accessibility & entry level skills for those currently removed from the labour market, in the face of an increasingly digitally aware employment landscape.

The Regional Skills Partnership in North Wales continues to lead and facilitate development in partnership with all key providers, employers, and industry representative bodies across the region, with a common goal of developing and retaining a prosperous and sustainable labour market that is increasingly productive, as a part of the Bid and wider Vision.

North Wales is seeing genuine collaborative working across all sectors and outlets, building on the current example set by the Regional Skills Partnership, to help promote a region that delivers on the economy of the future. Working in partnership we are striving towards narrowing the qualifications and skills gaps between North Wales and Europe, to deliver a region where economic growth is powered by innovation in high value economic sectors.

From delivering the first regional Welsh Language Skills in the Economy report in April 2018; to the continued expansion and promotion of our employer led ACT ON STEM programme for all 360+ primary schools across North Wales; to the recent approval of our 'STEM Gogledd' project from WEFO; to continuing to work since 2014, working in partnership with managers in our colleges to influence and direct the curriculum; working directly with employers and projects of regional importance such as Wylfa Newydd to undertake an analysis on the impact for skills within the labour market; and supporting employment brokerage services based on our previous successes; the Regional Skills Partnership through the sum of its partners are all actively engaged and supportive of our outputs.

All are working collectively to deliver a skills and employment landscape that is smart, resilient, and connected, to the wider digital developments & economic aspirations for North Wales, and reflecting the mobility of our labour market, beyond our current natural regional borders.

Section 2: Priorities for the Region

North Wales, through the Economic Ambition Board, has developed a single, joined-up vision for economic and employment growth of which skills is a key component; with a commitment between all the partners to work together collaboratively for a common purpose that builds on the existing work of collectives such as the Regional Skills Partnership.

It has been agreed to focus more on “inclusive growth”, addressing social and spatial irregularities and inequalities within the region. Growth will need to be dispersed and scalable, with an increase in higher level skills, and greater accessibility to enter and move upward within our labour market, in accordance with the priorities of the Welsh Government’s Economic Action Plan and our obligation under the Well-Being of Future Generations Act.

There is clear ambition for the region to position itself as one of the leading UK locations for energy generation and advanced manufacturing – as well as becoming a hub of innovation and technology expertise, and a centre of excellence for high value tourism. This ambition to deliver these skills and employment opportunities, builds on existing strengths and known opportunities across North Wales, and its delivery will create a more sustainable and balanced approach to support our communities, our economy, and our labour market post Brexit; and in response to large scale projects of national significance such as Wylfa Newydd and its impact on supply chains and labour.

As a dedicated sub-group of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board, the Regional Skills Partnership has been actively contributing to, and supporting the development of the initial Growth Vision and its three key aims, which in turn, have informed the focus of our Growth Deal:

Smart North Wales – with a focus on innovation in high value economic sectors to advance economic performance;

Resilient North Wales – with a focus on retaining young people, increasing employment levels and skills to achieve inclusive growth;

Connected North Wales – with focus on improving transport and digital infrastructure to enhance strategic connectivity to and within the region.

The Regional Skills Partnership will also continue to champion delivery of our previous and ongoing aims working both within, and outside of the region as necessary to support our increasingly mobile labour market, our employers, our providers, and all applicable local, regional and national partners.

As with our previous published Skills & Employment Plans, our key sectors of focus remain as – ‘Energy & Environment’, ‘Advanced Materials & Manufacturing’, and ‘Construction’; whilst our growth sectors of focus for the region remain are consistent in being – ‘Health & Social Care’, ‘Tourism & Hospitality’, ‘Food & Drink’, ‘Creative & Digital’, and ‘Financial & Professional.’


The aims and aspirations on which we continue to promote accessibility, inclusivity, and pathways to opportunity for our current and future workforce as key enablers, include:

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| Continued support of Apprenticeships as an enabler, with a move towards higher level and Degree Apprenticeships where applicable | Continue to work in response to employers calls for delivery of greater employability skills and vocational experience for young people |
| Further promote the necessity of digital skills and enabling technologies of Industry 4.0 to support all key and growth sectors in the region | Further promote the value of bilingualism to our economy by supporting the Welsh language in both places of education and employment |
| Develop and input further our work on supporting the new education curriculum to demonstrate connectivity for future skills needs | Continue to be an honest broker that brings together employers, providers, and applicable partners to deliver on national & regional aims |


Section 3: Key Achievements and Progress since 2017

The Regional Skills Partnership in North Wales continues to deliver clear outcomes to support delivery of our aims and objectives, whilst supporting delivery partners and employers from all cohorts to promote sustainable skills and employment opportunities.

In summary, during the last year, our achievements include the following outcomes:

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| <p>Organised with partners the Seren Network event for gifted and talented 16-18 year olds, promoting employment & careers opportunities in North Wales.</p> | <p>Developed, published, and launched the “Welsh Language in North Wales” report, working with employers, providers, and national bodies including the Welsh Language Commissioner.</p> | <p>Presented alongside the Secretary of State for Wales, Cabinet Secretary for Economy, and regional leaders, on the skills available to support the siting of a Logistic Hub for Heathrow in North Wales</p> |  | <p>Commissioned by the Anglesey Enterprise Zone Board to develop a bespoke skills programme to support excellence in the Tourism & Hospitality sector based on the ACT on STEM programme.</p> |
|  | <p>Continue to work directly with GwE and schools across the region, in supporting the development of the new national curriculum for Wales, promoting economic alignment to future skills demands</p> | <p>The RSP continues to directly input into, and support the development of projects within the wider North Wales Growth Deal, and the realigned North Wales Economic Ambition Board</p> | <p>We are the only RSP to have been invited to present to national conferences such as the Adult Learning Conference; Food & Drink Wales; as well as share best practice with other regional bodies such as the Cardiff Commitment Board.</p> | <p>Continue to support and engage with the PROFI employability programme at Bangor University, to highlight future opportunities and skills for young people within the region.</p> |
| <p>The North Wales RSP has worked with other partners from across Wales in national discussions facilitated by Learning & Workers Institute, to develop & deliver national Adult Learners Week in Wales</p> | <p>We organised, and hosted the first ‘Wales Employment & Skills Board’ attended by Minister, Eluned Morgan AM here in North Wales, on behalf of Welsh Government</p> |  | <p>We continue to work closely with and support national organisations such as the Princes Trust Cymru, to help deliver consistency and alignment in approach to supporting skills for young people</p> | <p>Promote and routinely maintain an online, freely accessible, Regional Skills Event Calendar for both public and partners to utilise; promoting key skills events for businesses and individuals.</p> |
| <p>Working with CITB Wales on delivering a joint skills analysis for the construction industry across North Wales, in response to projected employment demands for Wylfa Newydd.</p> | <p>Promote apprenticeship opportunities across the region by working with both employers and providers to identify solutions to demand needs and maximising brokerage opportunities</p> | <p>We led in partnership with employers and Careers Wales, an online suite of promotional resources to support employability skills applicable to our region.</p> | <p>We continue to input, support and direct many of our ESF funded regional skills projects to help maintain alignment, focus, and delivery in line with wider regional skills needs and lifelong learning</p> | <p>Continue to work closely with both FEI’s in the region, including working with all curriculum managers to ‘regionally proof’ future curriculum offers promoted, based on our Regional Skills Plan.</p> |



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| <p>Successfully obtained private sector funding and sponsorship from Siemens and Airbus to continue the development of our ACT ON STEM programme into the secondary school sector.</p> | <p>Promoted how the RSP delivers on partnership working to support the Estyn inspections of both individual education authorities, and FE colleges within the region.</p> | <p>Worked with regional colleagues to develop a North Wales response to the consultation on funding for Wales post-Brexit, and identify potential issues for skills, particularly within our Foundation Economy.</p> | <p>Continue to work closely with WG to help inform and support the development of national skills & employability policies, to help alignment to regional needs and local delivery across North Wales.</p> |  |
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Section 4: Membership & Governance

The Regional Skills Partnership in North Wales continues to promote its structure and membership within each of its published annual Regional Skills & Employment Plans.

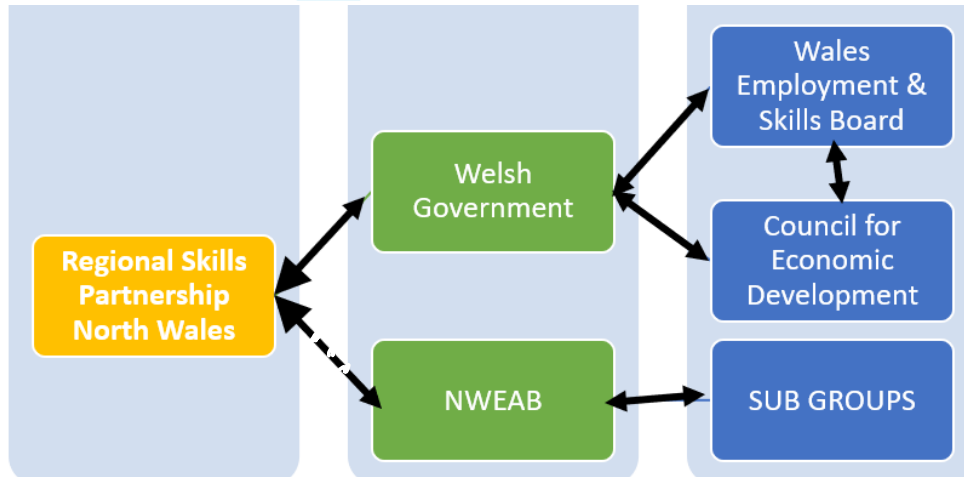
The Regional Skills Partnership in North Wales continues to be a sub-group of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board, and within the new arrangements promoted as part of the North Wales Growth Deal, this connectivity and transparency with the wider regional agenda will be maintained, as we will continue to support, deliver for, and report to, the regional board as one its key thematic Sub-Boards.

Links to Welsh Government through our membership of the Wales Employment & Skills Board (WESB) remains critical, to help inform and retain information from all three regions working collectively with other nationally focused partners, as the outcomes from WESB inform the Council for Economic Development, chaired by the First Minister.

The North Wales Regional Skills Partnership was proud to have organised and hosted the first meeting of the Wales Employment & Skills Board attended by the new Minister for Welsh Language, Lifelong Learning & Skills in March 2018 at Theatr Clwyd in Mold. Similarly, the Regional Skills Partnership was further recognised when our Chair, Sasha Davies, was invited to attend and present at the National Council for Economic Development in Cardiff in June 2018.

The governance of the Regional Skills Partnership has been in place since 2013, and is currently to be reviewed in light of the developing arrangements with the revised North Wales Economic Ambition Board and the delivery of projects within the North Wales Growth Deal. A synergy with governance arrangements that complement those also in development with other regions in Wales, will be an outcome we will look to work towards in the coming months.

The membership of the Regional Skills Partnership in North Wales, is representative of both employers, providers, and other applicable partners. We have published our sector and organisational membership annually since 2015, and recently have updated this to our online webpages for greater transparency.



Regional Skills Partnership North Wales Current Membership

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| Sasha Davies (Chair) – Energy & Environment | Sioned Williams – Local Government | Sian Lloyd Roberts – NWEAB |
| Ffion Jones – NWEAB | Katie Edwards – NWEAB | Arwyn Thomas – Schools / GwE |
| Ashley Rogers – Business Council | Aulay Mackenzie – Wrexham Glyndŵr University | Barbara Burchell – NWEAB Regional Engagement Team |
| Beverley Lovatt – DWP | Bryn Jones – Bangor University | Charlotte Walton – Social Care |
| Christine Wynne – EPC & 14-19 | Claire Williams – Construction | Debbie Bryce – Chamber of Commerce |
| Gail Dervish – Third Sector | Garffild Lewis – Creative & Digital | Gavin Jones – Manufacturing |
| James Nelson – Grŵp Llandrillo Menai | Jim Jones – Tourism & Hospitality | Lynnette Thomas – Open University |
| Mandy Hughes; Sue Green – Health | Mike Learmond – Federation of Small Businesses | Nerys Bourne – Careers Wales |
| Ruth Collinge – NTFW | Sue Price – Coleg Cambria | Vacant – Food & Drink |
| Vacant – Financial & Professional | Jayne Roberts – Welsh Government (Observer) | Meurig Thomas – Welsh Government (Observer) |

Section 5: Employer Engagement Strategy

Since 2016, the Regional Skills Partnership in North Wales has had an employer as our Chair – Sasha Davies from Horizon Nuclear Power.

Building on the work and commitment from both our previous public sector Chairs, we now have a direct insight and steer as a partnership from one of the key strategic officers of a global company, that will soon be spearheading one of the largest projects in Wales & the UK, that will be constructed here in North Wales – Wylfa Newydd.

The role of, engagement with, and delivery of outcomes with employers from all areas of the region; from a variety of sectors; and with companies of varying size; has existed since the creation of the initial Employment & Skills Sub-Group of the NWEAB in 2013, and has continued to evolve and develop since.

Rather than create a duplicative suite of additional employer cluster sub-groups, in North Wales, the RSP decided to use existing forums and groups of employers, where engagement could be undertaken directly, and with a wider membership base of partner organisations, that gives us access to both our substantial rural and urban economies.

As members of the Regional Skills Partnership, we value the input of, and access to the wider membership of employer representative bodies including the Federation of Small Businesses, North Wales & Mersey Dee Business Council, and the West Cheshire & North Wales Chamber of Commerce; the senior leaders of all three within North Wales, sit on the Regional Skills Partnership.

The RSP routinely engages with these organisations outside of our meetings in other forums and events, attending their own networks and board meetings, in addition to providing bespoke updates & articles for membership publications, and bespoke data and intelligence to support local, regional, and national events they each lead on and contribute towards.



Access to these networks enables us to engage directly with companies across North Wales, from single entrepreneurs and micro businesses, through to SME's, and through our 60,000, registered business across North Wales, upto our larger anchor companies operating here within our region to collectively support and influence our curriculum planning by partners.

We continue to support Welsh Government events and meetings with regional anchor companies when they are held in North Wales, and continue to contribute and support a number of requests from wider branches of government to support investment, policy, and consultation with larger companies, promoting to, and responding on skills issues, opportunities, and promotion of equality of accessibility to skills.

A recent example on 17 May 2018, was our direct input into the presentation and showcase to attract one of the new Heathrow Logistics Hubs to North Wales. Having initially provided a considerable and broad range of skills and employment data, alongside contextual regional demographic data in response to requests from Welsh Government in 2017 at the outset of the initial exercise, we presented in May 2018 alongside Alun Cairns MP, Ken Skates AM, and regional leaders, at a presentation event to Heathrow colleagues, on the skills and employment advantages of our labour market, collated by the RSP, to help attract this investment to North Wales.



In addition to routine and ongoing engagement with employers through the existing established networks and forums in North Wales, we also undertake additional bespoke engagements to support the portfolio of work relating to skills and employment. We continue to engage and support with businesses in relation to all of the ESF skills related projects we initiated and supported from concept, now operational and delivering with business, for business across the region.

We have also in the last year, facilitated the development of the now WEFO approved, STEM Gogledd Project with partners, and engaged with employers which resulted in securing one match funding contribution in excess of £200,000 from a single long established major employer, and additional welcome financial match funding from many others.

Examples of direct employer engagement include where a furniture and upholstery factory in Deeside approached us regarding how to support bespoke apprenticeships, which then delivered a result of Coleg Cambria working with a training provider from the north of England, to establish a dedicated training academy for apprenticeships on site within their factory which supplies major high street retailers UK wide.

Another large global employer whom we have worked with on identifying future skills needs regionally in our projects, is SIEMENS. Whilst they have a long established base in Llanberis, we have been working closely with their UK skills and education team based in Manchester, on identifying broader skills within the manufacturing sector that will be needed as a result of A.I. and continued advances across Industry 4.0 for North Wales.

We also worked on a bespoke project to promote employability skills with young people as a direct response to employer engagement, and the initial first phase, saw us successfully engage with companies including Harlech Foods, Griffiths Civil Engineering, & Horizon Nuclear Power. Working in addition with education partners, DWP and Careers Wales, we delivered online resources aimed at young people, promoting the employability skills required by employers in North Wales.

With 67% of our 60,000 registered businesses across the region employing less than 5 people, access to such a large number with such a small central resource is not an easy feat. However, through the networks listed above, we endeavour to consult and engage with as many as possible to help inform our future projections, and areas of focus.

A key source of routine regular employer data is through our bespoke questions on skills and training contained within our RSP partner, West Cheshire and North Wales Chamber of Commerce, quarterly employer survey. This survey is one of the most well supported regionally, and provides quarterly trend data which also mirrors our cross-border economy and labour market in North Wales.

The most recent data for the second quarter of 2018 shows that 75% of the businesses surveyed across this large and diverse geography, were planning to up-skill, train, and develop their existing staff within the next 6 months, with 54.5% of those above, preferring to deliver this in-house. However, some respondents also indicated that they would continue to work with further and education partners (34%) whilst the remainder would engage with private training providers.

Section 6: Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

The approach taken within our region, is one that all partners acknowledge as #TeamNorthWales.

The commonality of approach to supporting stakeholders, their projects, and delivery outcomes as part of a regional consensus, has been key to the success to date of partnership working across North Wales, and cross-border.

Since 2014, we have worked with curriculum managers on an annual basis in both further education colleges, to undertake 'challenge & support' sessions with all managers, to identify if draft proposals to upskill our current and future labour supply, meets current and future regional demands. The support provided to curriculum managers to identify what is needed to prepare and upskill people for jobs we know are, or will be there, is critical to promoting a sustainable pipeline of progression for North Wales.

Having already worked with curriculum managers and college leaders consistently and routinely over the last four years, we have in North Wales, already seen the differences made in provision that we need and require as a region. Our providers have been open and accessible, and more importantly, responsive to the regional and sector needs identified within not only the annual Regional Skills & Employment Plan, but through continued and ongoing dialogue and engagement throughout each year to date.

Working as part of #TeamNorthWales, has enabled open and transparent discussion and planning, with regional quantitative and qualitative data being provided by the RSP, to substantiate and support the expenditure made on the development of new teaching facilities, including the Engineering Centre in Llangefni on Anglesey, and the Construction Centre of Excellence at Bersham Road in Wrexham.

In addition to working with partners within the region, we continue to routinely and regularly engage with national partners such as the Princes Trust, Learning & Workers Institute, Colleges Wales, Qualifications Wales, CADW, National Assembly, and BBC Cymru Wales, to help engage with, and promote North Wales issues and developments on behalf of the RSP and our partners.

Working with the Enterprise Zones within the region is also a key consideration of our ongoing engagement and understanding of the demands of employers, and how we work with providers to help steer their focus toward meeting these. One recent example is the work we have been commissioned to undertake and lead from the Anglesey Enterprise Zone, that takes our existing 'ACT ON STEM' model, and now work with employers across the island, to apply to promoting the sustainable skills and expertise required by the tourism and hospitality industry that make it accessible and attractive to all cohorts.

Moving into 2019, we now acknowledge that building on our extensive, flexible, and responsive stakeholder engagement processes to date over the last five years, we will now look to formalise this and capture within an agreed and formalised Engagement Strategy. This will be consulted on, and agreed during 2019 to also incorporate and promote the accessibility agenda around disabled people being able to access skills training and employment opportunities within the region supported by our partners.

A small selection of the constant engagements we undertake with stakeholders from both inside and outside of the region to promote the work of partners and significant role of the RSP includes since January 2018, the following examples:

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| JANUARY 2018 | Leading a working group with local authorities, further education, employers, WG, and CADW to identify the development of skills support for heritage skills within the slate valleys, to align to the bid for World Heritage Status. |
| | Engaged with agricultural sector leads to identify and support future skills needs and provision for the rural economy of North Wales |
| | Support and presented to Business Wales events held within the region |
| FEBRUARY 2018 | Continued working with GwE as a member of their Advisory Board to inform both national curriculum development and teacher leadership programmes for North Wales aligned to economic & skills agenda |
| | Presented at the National Food & Drink conference held in Venue Cymru to promote this Growth Sector as identified in our Skills Plan for North Wales, and participate in an expert panel alongside employers |
| | Routine meetings with employers in locations across the region, including as a member of the St Asaph Business Park Executive Group |
| | RSP team co-led and organised the WG sponsored, 'Beyond SEREN' event in Venue Cymru, bringing together employers and Yr 12 students |
| MARCH 2018 | Led the organisation and hosting of the Wales Employment & Skills Board held in Theatr Clwyd, and showcase our Creative & Digital sector |
| | Continued engagement with Chamber of Commerce cross-border, to further engage with the quarterly employer membership survey on skills |
| | Drafted proposals on development of a Skills Gap analysis presented to, Horizon Nuclear Power led - Wylfa Construction Skills RSP Sub Group |
| APRIL 2018 | Facilitated and led multi-partner working groups to support work on the promotion & development of Outline Business Cases for the Growth Deal |
| | Launched the first in Wales – Welsh Language Skills in the Economy – report for the region, to capacity audience at Porth Eirias, Colwyn Bay |

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| | Discussions with headteachers on the promotion of STEM and excellence in our schools, and linking to employers for sponsorship opportunities |
| | Presenting to Cardiff Commitment Strategic Leadership Group at their invitation, to learn from our best practice already delivered by our RSP |
| MAY 2018 | Collation of evidence and additional presentation data for lead partners at the Deeside Jobs & Prosperity Summit organised by Jack Sargeant AM |
| | Working with CITB Wales & UK colleagues to develop an analysis of the construction sector in North Wales and its demands relating to Wylfa |
| | Continue working with Anglesey Enterprise Zone and employers on skills projects |
| | North Wales, the only RSP invited to contribute and be part of the expert panel at the National Adult Learners Conference in Cardiff City Stadium |
| | Led the research & development of evidence of skills to present alongside UK & Welsh Govts., at Heathrow Logistics Hub pitch for region |
| JUNE 2018 | Working with national construction employers at event in Port Talbot to identify national schools programme to promote skills in the industry |
| | Working with cross-border partners to identify how to promote work co-led on aligning graduate destinations to Skills Plan growth & key sectors |
| | Leading a workshop on the role of RSP's supporting Growth & City Deals in the national NTFW conference at the Celtic Manor Resort, Newport |
| | Chairing the network meetings of all national and regional projects delivering in North Wales for all WEFO programmes aligned to ESF. |

Section 7: Support for the North Wales Growth Deal

As a dedicated sub-group of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board, the Regional Skills Partnership has been actively involved and both contributing and supporting the development of the initial Growth Vision and its three key aims, which in turn, have informed the development and focus of the Growth Deal for North Wales:

Smart North Wales – with a focus on innovation in high value economic sectors to advance economic performance;

Resilient North Wales – with a focus on retaining young people, increasing employment levels and skills to achieve inclusive growth;

Connected North Wales – with focus on improving transport and digital infrastructure to enhance strategic connectivity to and within the region.

Whilst skills is a cross-cutting theme supporting all aims above and the projects developed within the Growth Deal, the specific projects within the 'Resilience' theme have seen partners within the Regional Skills Partnership directly involved in their consultation, development, and production of Outline Business Cases.

Data from the Regional Skills Plan has directly provided the contextual evidence required to substantiate baseline proposals, and RSP partners have been drafted into development discussions as required, to align sector, regional, and future skills needs together, with key projects developed including Centres of Excellence aligned to both growth sectors in the Skills Plan, and specific project opportunities; in addition to supporting Employability and the emerging Gateway to support and complement, 'Working Wales'.

The Chair of the Regional Skills Partnership is an observer member currently of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board alongside other regional leaders, to help deliver connectivity at a strategic level; whilst the Regional Programme Manager for the RSP is working with partners on the development of the Outline Business Cases to support the Growth Deal.

With a clear structure for the Growth Deal to be delivered and managed by the North Wales Economic Ambition Board, and its five thematic sub-boards, the Regional Skills Partnership takes the role of the Employment & Skills Sub-Board for the region, to align and connect the applicable relationships and line of accountability.

As a key part of the new governance structure for the reconfigured North Wales Economic Ambition Board, the Regional Skills Partnership for North Wales will benefit from the Boards clear leadership and accountability for strategic direction and outcomes as an economic driver for North Wales; supported by an RSP to inform and support the skills and employment agenda across all outputs as part of a single strong and united voice for North Wales.

The existing and future outputs and coordination from the Regional Skills Partnership, will be a key contributor to the NWEAB as it looks to increase the value of the north Wales economy from £13.6 billion in 2016 to £26 billion by 2035; and create 5,000 direct jobs supported by private sector investment achieved as a direct consequence of the projects being delivered (private sector leverage) to a value of £3.6bn.

Section 8: Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Regional Skills Partnership in North Wales, continues to undertake a key role in the research function of each regional ESF project in gathering the evidence base for the region which clearly demonstrates actions to address social inequalities, deprivation and skills implications, aligned to the wider goals of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act in Wales.

Three of our regional ESF funded projects in particular, have a substantial amount of evidence gathered to address this:

TRAC is a project for 11-18 year olds in education who are at risk of becoming NEET after compulsory education. The key aim for this project is as a preventative measure for these vulnerable young people working within a collated approach involving the school, external agencies, parents and employers.

ADTRAC is a project in the region for those young people ages 16-24 who are NEET after compulsory education and need support to re-engage in education and help to overcome the difficult barriers. A unique element is the partnership formed with Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board to provide support to the high demand of young people who are NEET with mental health issues, and addressing this barriers to enable them to reengage.

OPUS which is provision aimed at those aged 25+ who are economically inactive or long term unemployed. This cohort is furthest from the labour market and have complex barriers to get back into the labour market. The evidence for this project came from data gathered by RSP partners referring to pockets of 'entrenched' worklessness in the region.

Public Sector partners of the RSP in North Wales have specific Equality and Diversity Policies, available online, supported by procedures, monitoring and reporting practices in place, accountable to the requirements of the Act and Welsh Government scrutiny.

The regional European Projects have collated all relevant equality and diversity policies and procedures to comply with the requirements of European funding requirements in the Business Plans through the Cross Cutting Themes, which is a significant section of each Business Plan. These are monitored regularly and diversity and numbers have to be reported on.

Examples from RSP partners include annual student voice surveys in both FE colleges, and annual HE student surveys. The results of these surveys are published and are available for parents, students and employers to review.

Many large employers in the region publish annual reports and report on Equality and Diversity and Health and Safety requirements. They also conduct employee surveys, employee consultation, employee away days and annual general/public meetings; with Horizon Nuclear Power, a clear current example of the considerable public engagement at events across the region being held.

Also, many private sector companies in the region also have corporate and social responsibility policies which enable them to bring benefits to their employees and the wider community such as Zip World, Alun Griffith Contractors, Siemens, Theatr Clwyd, and Moneypenny amongst others, whom all have community and/or family events and investments on a regular basis.

According to the Living Wage Foundation, in 2018 there were 152 employers across Wales who declared that they are paying their staff the living wage. In North Wales there are approximately a total of 60,000 employers, and the RSP would support and promote the role of Business Wales within Welsh Government to undertake this further detailed analysis, as the dedicated resource for business engagement lies here, and is not funded through the RSP. Our role currently based on existing funding, is to support, and signpost with those employers whom we engage with, and as an RSP in North Wales, would be fully supportive of moves to further promote equality for fair pay and employment.

Data from our own online data observatory for North Wales, collates information on average wage and salary levels across the region in comparison to the Welsh average. Latest data illustrates that employees weekly average wage is generally below the Welsh average of £12.75, and the UK average of £14.00.

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| Anglesey | £12.43 | Conwy | £13.14 | Flintshire | £12.89 |
| Gwynedd | £10.98 | Denbighshire | £11.51 | Wrexham | £12.11 |

The Regional Skills Partnership is directly contributing to the work on the the North Wales Growth Bid and its aim to reduce inequality and low pay within North Wales by Improving skills and increasing pressure on the jobs market will help push up wages. Proposals for 'inclusive growth' will seek to expand the workforce by a number of targeted measures working with DWP and other agencies, including bringing people currently marginalised by poor health, low level skills and poor transport access to employment, back into the working population with targeted supported. The Bid will also put forward targets for increasing workforce participation and reducing poverty.

Supporting our almost 12,000 people in North Wales who are currently registered with a disability, with improved transport and specific measures to improve access to work for all cohorts of our society, will enable more people to travel to work conveniently, increasing the agglomeration effect across North Wales and the Mersey Dee cross-border economy, reflecting our increasingly mobile labour market that is domiciled within North Wales.

The RSP is working with the North Wales Growth Bid to help inform and develop a more place based approach to economic development, with more of the resources and services to support the North Wales economy based in North Wales and advised and supported by North Wales voices. This is at the heart of the "Team North Wales" concept.

Section 9: Labour Market Intelligence

The template and guidance from Welsh Government asks Regional Skills Partnerships to specify the additional sources of Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) it has been able to procure, obtain, and use for this exercise.

The sources listed below are an example selection in addition to statistics, data and intelligence provided by Welsh Government and obtained from Stats Wales, Office for National Statistics, and other formal and statutory government sponsored data collation outlets, and includes commissioned frameworks of data analysis amongst providers in North Wales and cross-border, which the Regional Skills Partnership routinely uses in addition to the work on the Skills & Employment.

CITB Workforce Data

Working in partnership with CITB at a Wales and UK level, we have undertaken an analysis of the construction workforce with the primary focus of identifying the impacts and opportunities for skills and employment within the sector as a result of major infrastructure projects such as Wylfa Newydd. This has allowed us access to Glenigan data, in addition to other sector specific workforce data outlets.

GwE Regional Education Consortia Data

Continuing to build our working relationship with GwE over the last three years, we are now working in partnership on the development of the proposals for the new national curriculum, and therefore have been able to work collectively on data regarding current and future skills for staff within the education sector across the region. This is in addition to anonymised key data & intelligence on pupil progression, subject choices and results for all counties which we have aligned to key project opportunities, within our key & growth sectors.

West Cheshire & North Wales Chamber of Commerce Quarterly Employer Survey

The CEO of the Chamber is a member of the Regional Skills Partnership in North Wales, and champions access to their members on key skills issues and opportunities. We have worked with the communications team within the Chamber to incorporate specific questions on skills & training, within their quarterly survey to provide us with a key regional, and cross-border barometer of their current and potential future demands.

Ongoing Employer Engagement Survey

The central team within the Regional Skills Partnership has a core suite of survey questions which they routinely ask employers at all employer events which we attend within the region – ranging from Skills Cymru, to the Beyond SEREN network event we co-hosted, to the Business Growth North Wales conference at Theatr Clwyd, to network events at county level such as that on Anglesey where we as the RSP have been commissioned to undertake a specific project supporting the Anglesey Enterprise Zone Board.

Ongoing Student Engagement Survey

To compliment the ongoing employer engagement survey above, the central team of the Regional Skills Partnership also has a core suite of survey questions which they routinely ask students and clients at all skills related events which we attend within the region to gain information on future aspirations, career choices, and preferred methods of study. This data continues to be obtained from events such as Skills Cymru, career fairs at county level, events in partnership with our universities such as PROFI at Bangor, and future construction skills at Wrexham Glyndwr.

Career Check Data from Careers Wales

We have a close working relationship with Careers Wales both regionally and nationally and support their Career Check survey annually as key diagnostic tool to help inform future skills and employment trends. Whilst the national response rate of approximately 31,000 Year 10 pupils is 75%, in North Wales, due to partnership working and promotion, the response rate for our region has been on average 85% for the last three years. It provides us with key trends on future skills aspirations, and demonstrates the impact of interventions for careers advice and guidance in monitoring and analysing post-16 destination data and choices.

Section 10: BREXIT

Since we included significant detail in the 2017 Regional Skills & Employment Plan on the potential impact on North Wales due to BREXIT, there has not been any significant change in both the data available, and our cautious approach in light of, no clear deal, between the UK government and the European Union being met.

However, with BREXIT now getting closer as the period for negotiation is due to expire in 2019, we now need more than ever to invest in the skills and talents of our domiciled current and future all-age apprenticeships in North Wales, to support employers, our key and growth sectors, and our current & future workforce.

The recent announcement by AIRBUS on its consideration of exiting the UK should a 'no-deal' scenario become a reality, will have a significant impact on North Wales, due to the location of its 439,000 square foot, flagship factory at Broughton in Flintshire, which employs over 6,000 employees directly; at least 60% of whom, live in North Wales.

In addition to the potential impact, should AIRBUS vacate the UK, on the supply chain in North Wales, particularly around Deeside, there will be a detrimental impact on future skills and employment. AIRBUS currently promotes the availability of around 100+ apprenticeships annually at its Broughton site, in addition to the considerable work it does with education partners in promoting STEM based studies and careers generally through its contribution to schools, further & higher education, and our own RSP led, ACT ON STEM programme.

With a current reliance on European Social Fund (ESF) and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) for delivery of funding to projects supporting skills and employment across North Wales, the questions over future replacements of funding to support these areas of activity on the skills and employment agenda are still yet to be agreed and made clear.

The CBI in Wales mirrors the wishes of many employers and education & training providers in North Wales in that key principles for the negotiation for the UK's exit from the European Union, should include:

A migration system which allows businesses to access the skills and labour they need to deliver growth

An approach that protects the social and economic benefits of EU funding with guarantees to regions such as North Wales

FSB Wales undertook a survey of its members in November 2016, the results of which have informed their report, 'A skilful exit: What small firms want from Brexit'.

From the survey of employers across Wales, it shows one fifth (21%) of small employers currently have EU staff. This national figure mirrors the overall regional perception for North Wales, but with the caveat in certain local geographies such as Llandudno for example, the tourism and hospitality sector has a higher proportion of EU staff.

Whilst there is much debate on the impact of BREXIT, there has yet to be approximate figures on the potential impact of BREXIT in North Wales in terms of people. Research the Regional Skills Partnership in North Wales has led, has drawn out the numbers involved, with a commitment to monitor and undertake further detailed analysis later in 2017.

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| 14,300 | 20,900 | 3,900 | 9,700 |
| EU nationals currently working in North Wales | EU nationals currently living in North Wales | Other non EU nationals working in North Wales | Other non EU nationals living in North Wales |

EU funding has significantly supported both higher and further education in North Wales as elsewhere, and their promotion of employment skills via a suite of bespoke projects; two of the most recent being the SEE (Support for Employers and Employees) project managed regionally by Coleg Cambria; and the ‘North Wales Business Academy’ project, managed regionally by Grwp Llandrillo Menai. With both projects collectively receiving funding approximately in the region £20million, there is a significant level of uncertainty as to how this will be replicated in the absence of EU structural funds.

| | |
|--|--|
| 965 | 2,215 |
| EU nationals studying at HEI’s in North Wales | Other non EU nationals studying at HEI’s in North Wales |

UK universities receive an additional 15 per cent in funding from the EU and some believe the UK could lose this. For Bangor, Wrexham Glyndwr and Chester Universities amongst others, it could also mean academics will struggle to cooperate on research projects. A change in visa arrangements for other European countries may also deter high-calibre academics from joining our universities, particularly at crucial times when economic developments such as Wylfa Newydd offer considerable potential for research, innovation, and development of higher level skills within the region.

The Open University within a recent study on the impact of skills noted how employers were finding it increasingly difficult to recruit staff with the appropriate skills, but also highlighted:

“... uncertainty surrounding Brexit was exacerbating the skills gap.”

As a result, the survey found that many firms are having to hire temporary staff and pay additional recruitment fees, as well as higher salaries; an approach that many employers within North Wales, particularly within tourism & hospitality, as well as Creative & Digital, are already finding increasingly commonplace.

Whilst previous research by the RSP in North Wales with its partners, had indicated the major impact of BREXIT could be the loss of EU skills currently deployed within many of the sectors of our ‘Foundation Economy’ – health & social care; tourism & hospitality; agriculture & food production – we now have the additional threat of the loss of many high skilled jobs across our wider manufacturing supply chains, should the potential loss of AIRBUS sadly become a reality, and other large employers follow suit.

The RSP and its partners in light of this announcement (22 June 2018) will continue to work collaboratively to support all individuals and businesses affected, and proactively look to prepare solutions in draft with all applicable partners, should this current threat to our regional economy, sadly become a reality post BREXIT and a ‘no-deal’ result between the EU and UK government.

Section 11: Careers Advice & Guidance

From being the first Regional Skills Partnership in Wales to engage and partner with Careers Wales on their “Spotlight on...” series and publication; to being the first RSP in Wales to establish a skills based brokerage programme with partners, on a major infrastructure project (construction of HMP Berwyn) for which we won a National Construction Excellence Award for ‘Leadership & Management’, the RSP in North Wales continues to be the most proactive and forward thinking in terms of careers advice and guidance.

We continue to identify and promote STEM careers opportunities aligned to each of our key and growth sectors promoted in previous Skills Plans. Working with employers from each of these sectors, Careers Wales, GwE, private training providers, and HE & FE colleagues, we continue to develop and promote our ACT ON STEM programme to promote the skills and qualifications needed for future careers in each of these sectors across the region.

Following on from the success of the above programme for primary, we have started work on developing an extension to the programme aimed at secondary pupils. Working with Careers Wales, the Reaching Wider programme at Bangor University, and employers across the region including Siemens and Airbus, the programme is currently being developed to be delivered in 2019 with funding gained from the private sector.

From our ongoing engagement and discussions with employers, one of the key barriers to employment for young people entering the labour market for the first time, was around their broader employability skills. Whilst many young people could demonstrate their academic qualifications, employers often note that the additional vocational and engagement skills needed by young people are lacking.

This is a visual resource that adds value to learning activities on employability skills.

Key messages and ‘top tips’ from young people and employers in North Wales

- How to be work ready
- Skills to succeed
- What employers are looking for



Working with Careers Wales, education partners, and key employers, we produced a detailed online resource that promotes the needs and expectation of employers, balanced with the voices of young people who are about to, or have just entered, the labour market in North Wales, to be a testimonial and promotional tool to others.

Learning from the success of our award winning brokerage scheme at the construction of HMP Berwyn, we are now working as part of the Wylfa Newydd Construction Skills Coordination Group, which as a sub-group of the RSP, has membership from CITB, GLLM, Horizon Nuclear Power, Welsh Government, DWP, and Careers Wales.

Currently undertaking a joint analysis with CITB on matching the current and future skills in North Wales across the construction industry available within the region, to the expected roles and opportunities required during the construction phase of the project, this key resource document, will help support and inform the brokerage programme, facilitated by DWP on behalf of the region, to help inform careers, jobs, and skills for Wylfa Newydd and also its wider supply chain opportunities across complementary and contributory sectors across all of North Wales (e.g. food, hospitality, transport, health, manufacturing, etc.)

A key source of data to help regional planning by the RSP with its partners on future careers and skills demands in North Wales, is the use of the Careers Wales, Career Check diagnostic tool.

Whilst the national response rate of approximately 31,000 Year 10 pupils is 75%, in North Wales, due to partnership working and promotion, the response rate for our region has been on average 85% for the last three years.

In 2018, from the Careers Check survey in North Wales, of the 5,038 young people who participated, the top three career sector choices by the cohort surveyed were, Health & Medical (452), Leisure, Sport & Tourism (436), and Engineering (431). A key sector for the region in terms of current and future skills, ‘Building & Construction’ was

ranked 10th in the list of most popular sectors identified for a future career with only 220 young people, which equates to 4% of the total cohort surveyed.

The three year trend analysis we as an RSP have undertaken, shows that young people have quite traditional career ideas with very similar patterns of response by the different cohorts as the occupational choices of young people in year 10 have remained fairly stagnant over three years.

There was a rise from 329 in 2016, to 734 young people in 2018 indicating that they'd consider an apprenticeship as their first choice. This is the highest number recorded since the Career Check exercise started in 2013, this represents 15% of the cohort who completed the survey in North Wales indicating that they'd consider an Apprenticeship as their first choice after year 11.

The highest ranking apprenticeships as first choice occupations were engineering, construction in second place and leisure, sports and tourism in third place which meets two of our key sectors, and one of our growth sectors identified consistently within recent Regional Skills Plans.

This is a good indication that in North Wales, young people, teachers and parents are being influenced by the media marketing and careers advice of RSP partners collectively, of the benefits of apprenticeships as a real and valuable alternative to staying on in education. If this trend continues, or remains as high as this, employers will need to increase the number of apprenticeship vacancies available in order to meet the supply of potential labour. Also, if young people are going to be making apprenticeship choices at age 16, there needs to be better careers education and preparation in terms of young people's employability skills pre-Year 10, as demonstrated within our existing 'ACT ON STEM' employer led programme for primary schools across North Wales.

Within North Wales, we are also as an RSP, acutely aware, that with an aging population, and people working for longer, careers advice and guidance, should not only be promoted to young people; all ages across all demographics in North Wales, need and require, robust, intelligent, and informed, careers advice and guidance.

As an RSP, we will be working with partners increasingly to promote careers opportunities and pathways to both employers and individuals, to support our almost 12,000 disabled people resident in North Wales, develop and promote their skills into sustainable jobs and careers.

With the development of more online learning facilities, and specialist support and provision generally by our many providers, we need to ascertain how we address and positively overcome all barriers to learning, be it disability, rurality & accessibility, carer needs, single parents, returning to work, and upskilling in general – all can be positively and sustainably addressed in bespoke means to support individuals by working collectively through the Regional Skills Partnership to develop a common baseline approach that builds on many of our current ESF funded projects, and takes their principles into a more sustainable, pan-North Wales approach.

Section 12: Further Education and Apprenticeships

The general overview for the region regarding FE provision planning is that during the last 4 years there has been a clear and consistent focus on reducing the number in non-priority provision across North Wales, and that the current provision for both FEIs reflects the demand needs of our labour market, and our RSP Skills and Employment Plan.

Both FEIs have worked well in partnership with the RSP and as a region in reaching this optimum level of provision that mirrors the RSP plans and future projections that responds to large scales investments, and greater awareness of digitalisation and automation affecting all sectors.

With declining demographics currently forecast for the next 2 years within the region, we are therefore within a plateau and any reductions to provision, will lead to deletion of classes & courses, and no provision at all in some subject areas.

Routine detailed discussions between the RSP in North Wales, and curriculum managers at both Grwp Llandrillo Menai and Coleg Cambria, have seen both FEI's already put into place, reductions to provision over the last two to three years. The reductions already enacted in those areas highlighted in consultation & collaboration with the RSP and reflecting our annual Plans particularly since 2015, has resulted in a suite of provision at levels for 2018-19 and beyond, which are regionally appropriate, and in-line with current and forecasted expected demands.

With current provision levels being at 14% for part-time, and 86% for full-time in the region, both our FEIs are focusing on further increasing their full time provision and reducing their part time provision. Rather than reducing provision, this will result in an overall increase across many programmes with minimal reduction to counter balance this, due to the efficiencies made to date and progression as planned currently, despite recent announcements and uncertainty in sectors such as aerospace post 2019, which we will monitor and review in collaboration with partners as needed.

The increases indicated in this exercise are demonstrating a slight growth in priority sectors that are currently operational, in readiness for provisional projected start dates, demand and the longer term skills needed, in the construction of major projects such as Wylfa Newydd.

The rationale for slight increases at Level 2 and 3 are a reflection on the planned provision for 2018/19, bearing in mind that the cohort numbers in schools are choosing similar post 16 courses. Whilst the smaller numbers for Level 3 transparently reflects the conversion from these courses into apprenticeships, we are predicting that where there is planned increase at Level 1 or 2 in 2018/19, this will result in slight increases in 2019/2020.

The risk of decreasing priority sector provision could have an impact on the regional NEET numbers and increase the FE drop-out rate due to lack of choice in provision, but it is worth noting that our NEET numbers in North Wales are lower than in other parts of Wales.

Of note, is that this exercise is difficult to undertake when new programmes are being introduced such as "Enhanced" and "Accelerated" which impacts on continuity. Also, this exercise is carried out in isolation of the post 16 choices of vocational courses delivered in schools and whether there are planned increases and decreases in the provision there, which will have an impact on FE provision.

Also of note, are recent communications from the Federation of Master Builders Cymru on their survey (July 2018), that highlights the skills shortages facing the construction industry in Wales, with two-thirds of construction small and medium enterprises, struggling to hire bricklayers, and 60% are struggling to hire carpenters and joiners.

However, in North Wales, the issue is not provision, but attraction and promotion by the industry to get young people to undertake studies and apprenticeships into the industry. Both of our further education providers particularly, have worked with the industry closely in North Wales, to invest in new facilities, and the provision of courses to meet employer demands promoted via forums including the RSP, yet attracting the students onto these industry responsive courses, still does not meet demands.

Over the last 3 years regional WORK BASED LEARNING (WBL) partners have made huge efforts to focus on the provision in WBL for priority sectors and are currently delivering over 90% of programmes aligned to the regional priority sectors.

It is difficult to prioritise decreases in non-priority areas such as hairdressing due to business engagement in WBL amongst SMEs in the region in particular shows a continued demand for non-priority sector training, such as hairdressing. These are mainly in the foundation economy which is a vital part of the economy and forms the supply chain which underpins the priority sectors. Employer demand for training hairdressers and beauty therapy remains a buoyant industry in the region with many high streets having successful and long established hairdressing

businesses. If work based learning providers continue to decrease the number of hairdressing apprenticeships they will no longer be meeting the demand from employers in the region.

In order to be competitive WBL providers need to be responsive to labour market demands and changes at short notice and therefore 3 year projections are challenging to achieve.

The apprenticeship levy is starting to have a positive impact on increased demand for apprenticeships from employers. With additional funding and marketing there are potential increases year on year that can be achieved, without decreasing the non-priority sector provision. However, with 67% of businesses in North Wales employing less than 5 people, we still collectively have to work together as a region alongside Welsh Government and national sector bodies, to promote how we as an RSP, see apprenticeships are an extremely cost-effective way for organisations of all sizes to futureproof their business by growing their own talent.

Work Based Learning providers are seeing increasing pressure to meet Welsh Government targets that are not complementing the labour market and employer needs and also counteract other policies, such as reducing NEET numbers for those aged 16-24. In the region there is an ESF operation targeting those aged 16-24 and NEET, however Welsh Government directive is aimed at reducing the number of apprenticeship places available for those aged 20+ for Level 2 training.

The continuing trend of reducing Apprenticeships at Level 2 for those aged up to 24, increases the risk of higher levels of NEET, reduces options and opportunities for those on ESF projects, and risks employers losing a potential pool of labour to fill vacancies.

WBL providers in North Wales have already put into place, reductions to provision over the last two to three years, in those areas highlighted in consultation & collaboration with the RSP. This has resulted in a suite of current and future provision at levels which are regionally appropriate, and in-line with current and expected demands. Any increased reductions in provision in the immediate future therefore poses a genuine risk to meeting employer demands, and supporting sustainable and locally focused opportunities for young people.

Section 13: Skills Development Fund

The Regional Skills Partnership in North Wales, welcomed the offer made by Welsh Government in late April 2018 of a Skills Development Fund, for submission of proposals stipulated by the beginning of June 2018.

Designed to support further education provision to address specific job skills gaps regionally as identified by, and supported by the RSP, we have worked with our FE providers across North Wales following discussion with all RSP partners, to submit proposals that align to, and follow the brief as set out by Welsh Government.

Through discussions at the RSP, we identified that additional support was required for areas covering skills on employability, digital & IT, as well as broader vocational skills, that would apply to many of our key and growth sectors, promoting transferability of skills at a broad range of levels between 1 and 3.

Upon completion of this first year of funding, we would then be better placed to inform progression to higher level skills and identifying more innovative solutions, subject to testing engagement and demand during this first year. Critical for North Wales partners is that we agree to ensure we are meeting local needs through initial assessment, and whilst we expect individuals to initially need lower level interventions in this first year, we can offer the programmes identified from entry to level 3 as appropriate. As a region, we have also been conscious of whilst following the brief provided from WG, that we also demonstrate a clear partition between this Fund, and not duplicating provision within the Skills Priorities Programme.

The approach we have taken is to have an overarching ‘umbrella bid’ for North Wales comprising three parts – one from each of our two major North Wales FEI providers at Coleg Cambria and Grwp Llandrillo Menai, with the added inclusion of Adult Learning Wales, who whilst being an all-Wales body, continue to engage with a considerably smaller number of learners in comparison across North Wales.

Each provider has responded to the direction provided from the Regional Skills Partnership, using their own expertise and knowledge, to identify how they will be able to address this collectively, as it was agreed that sectors and skills aligned to the needs of the Foundation Economy within North Wales, should be a focus, and support the part-time skills provision required to demonstrate greater flexibility and innovation in meeting and supporting skills needs and provision across our region.

Agreement has been made that provision would see each provider delivering programmes in clear and distinct project areas which are aligned to DFES funding programmes including: Employability Skills (including literacy and numeracy); Digital Literacy; and Vocational Training, whilst promoting parity of opportunity and accessibility to all cohorts of our resident population.

Using a mix of assessed, and generic-non assessed qualifications, it would focus on those who are employed in full-time/part-time jobs to support the skills needed to progress in employment and add further value to their employer particularly those earning salaries around or below the national living wage; or those who are self-employed requiring the skills to develop and expand their business or possibly employ more staff.

Section 14: Skills Priorities Programme

Designed to support further education provision to develop more innovative and responsive approaches to meet employer needs, the Skills Priorities Programme in North Wales, has been a collaborative approach amongst partners, with the information published in the last three years Regional Skills & Employment Plans, directly influencing and informing the identification of technical and job specific higher level skills required by employers across the region.

Through a combination of the sector and employer representatives on the Regional Skills Partnership, the excellent working relationships our providers already have with many employers in the region, and the input and intelligence gained from our business and employer representative organisations, collectively, we continue to work collaboratively as a region, to identify opportunities, challenges, and areas of growth for higher level skills that we know are needed, required, and can provide sustainable employment, and positive economic growth.

Many of the interventions and planned provision to support higher level skills have already been put into place in previous years due to the engagement and transparency of discussions amongst RSP partners and industry leaders and employers here in North Wales.

We therefore, simply continue to monitor and adapt as required, building on a strong portfolio of resources and support in North Wales, that demonstrates our continued engagement – often through continued informality with employers at a broad range of meetings and events, without the need for additional working groups for our RSP, as we effectively use those forums and networks already in existence, to demonstrate greater effectiveness and synergy.

For 2018-19, we have continued to champion and recognise that higher level skills will be needed across many of our key and growth sectors, to both prepare and respond to economic developments and demands across the region, whilst also promoting the pathways into emerging Degree Apprenticeships as one form of opportunity.

Creative & Digital is one example of our growth sectors, which also has parity nationally, with looking to upskill our current & future workforce with higher level skills as we see increased automation in particularly our key sectors, and also the need to increasingly remain proactive as a response to Industry 4.0.

The Working Futures projections support our own regional research and discussions with employers, that there will be considerable growth in higher level occupations within this sector in the next five years. The Creative North Wales sector survey which we as an RSP support, found an acute shortage of IT software and hardware developers in the region and that as a response, we need to train, educate and increase provision, to attract people into these programmes and high value regional employment opportunities.

Through our direct linkages on the Regional Skills Partnership to the Health & Social Care sector, and also our proactive engagement and attendance at various regional practitioner and leader networks across North Wales, we are aware of the need to respond to as a region, the need to increase in provision required due to ongoing shortage of senior level staff in health and care profession regionally without the appropriate qualifications.

Increasing skills and qualifications in the workforce required in order to invest in and retain staff and invest in higher level skills and qualifications regionally is seen a key sector need for the current and future demands in North Wales. This will be alongside a higher demand and increase in the WBL provision due to the legislative requirement to upskill and register all care staff.

Planning for an increase within Level 4 and above to support Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction generally is also supported regionally as a key requirement and focus; particularly in preparation for the direct impact of Wylfa Newydd on Anglesey, and also its wider effect on the industries and skills within its supply chains in sectors particularly based in NE Wales around Deeside and Wrexham.

Whilst the development of the £20million AMRI at Deeside is welcomed and supported by the RSP as a further example alongside other new developments such as the Menai Science Park, and the proposed Rural Economy Hub at Glynllifon, to be beacons to champion and deliver higher level skills, particularly around STEM; we also need to support issues around accessibility to provision, and the delivery of higher level skills within the Welsh Language across North Wales.

Following the publication of our RSP report on Welsh Language Skills in the North Wales Economy, many of our RSP partners are reporting the continued challenges of bilingual staff and assessors for engineering, with similar issues for tutors and lecturers responsible for higher level skills in the construction sector. Coupled with a known shortage of Welsh speakers with particular focus on higher level IT, computer science and coding skills, we need to work more proactively as a region, to seek Welsh Government support to address these issues, in a region where as published within the 2017 Regional Skills & Employment Plan, 81% of businesses in North Wales, have staff with Welsh language skills, and 57% of those employers rate having staff with Welsh language skills as important.

Section 15: ESF

The region continues to implement and support ESF-funded activity in line with the priorities identified in the Regional Skills & Employment Plan, with the RSP in North Wales having facilitated and supported the development of 6 regional ESF projects to complement and add-value to nationally-led backbone delivery. All planned operations have been successful in being awarded ESF funding by WEFO, with 'STEM Gogledd' being the latest regional

operation to be awarded funding in 2018, as a response to needs identified within the previous RSP STEM Audit carried out in 2015-16.

The development of all 6 regional ESF project operations stem from our consultative approach working with partners, to ascertain regional needs, share information and data on regional trends, and deliver expert information & knowledge. Our role as a central coordination role and be a visible central point of contact, has enabled us to be a critical friend and impartial partner on an ongoing basis, to help analyse and review developments, provide the research support function to project leads, and to continue to lead the facilitation of networks and workshops working both with the Regional Engagement Team, and the projects directly.

All regional operations align closely to the Skills and Employment Plan, and have used current and consistent data to demonstrate the strategic fit and analysis of need for the region, differentiating from national strategies and projects. All project Business Plans have made reference to, and used data and quotations from, the Regional Skills Plan to inform requirements and the strategic fit section in particular. Any emerging ESF operations (national, regional, or niche) are formally regionally proofed by the Regional Engagement Team – who consult with the RSP and ensure alignment with the plan.

With the establishment of the RET, all emerging developing ESF activity has a formal requirement with WEFO to be regionally proofed. The RET ensure engagement with all relevant stakeholders, facilitating discussions, collaborations and ensuring fit with relevant regional strategies/plans – and ensuring added value/complementarity of the proposed investment, with no duplication of existing activity. As part of the regional proofing process (for both ESF and ERDF), specific consideration is given to the alignment with the Regional Skills Plan – and the RSP Programme Manager is fully involved in the proofing process.

Continued engagement between regional ESF projects is ensured through the Regional ESF Support Networks, which has been established as a formal sub-group of the RSP itself. Here, at both networks (one for P1 & P3, and another for P2 & P4) both RET and the RSP officers attend to ensure alignment and complementarity in their support for ESF projects currently operational within North Wales. This alignment of collaboration to avoid duplication and consistency of support has been further enhanced with the RSP Programme Manager now chairing both ESF networks prior to a new RET Manager to be appointed in late 2018.

All regionally-led operations developed have an identified exit strategy as part of the delivery of ESF funding. This continues to be evaluated as future policy emerges in light of Brexit, revisions to national employability policy etc. All ESF projects/lead organisations and partners are involved in current RSP activity around regional engagement on such issues to ensure the continued delivery of sustainable and positive outcomes to help support and inform work on the North Wales Growth Deal, to help ensure there is a sustainable growth vision post Brexit, for activities and priorities currently delivered by our projects.

Section 16: Employability and Regional Data to inform Working Wales

The primary challenge for the region is not a skills gap, but how to address a workforce gap in the region, when large projects such as Wylfa Newydd starts recruiting construction workers.

Whilst we have many skills within the region, the issue of replacement demand is potentially the largest challenge for the region as all sectors potentially can be at risk from the migration of workers into large projects of regional and national significance, operating within North Wales, where high wages, and the opportunity to sustain this over a number of years, will inevitably prove attractive to many.

The RSP in North Wales and its partners have actively used the data and analysis from the last Working Futures report, to understand in more detail, the predictions of the roles that need to be filled in the next 5-10 years.

This ranges in North Wales from up to 34% replacement demand needed for skilled trades in the energy and environment sectors up to 2024; to up to 40% replacement demand in skilled trades within the advanced manufacturing & engineering sectors.

With the recent survey published by the Federation of Master Builders Cymru, and our own RSP & CITB Wales joint analysis on the construction sector impact of Wylfa Newydd on skills in the region, we know that there will be a need for up to 34% replacement demand for skilled trades in construction needed up to 2024, in addition to the new roles being created, and the inevitable churn created in existing smaller businesses of staff being attracted to work on larger scale longer term projects.

The current construction workforce resident on Anglesey, if all employed at Wylfa Newydd, would only service a fifth of the potential workforce needed there, with a peak expectation of 8,500 people approximately in 2023-24. This further strengthens the need for all professional bodies within the construction sector, to work collectively to help promote the career opportunities and broader skills opportunities available, to enable the fulfilment of places currently offered on appropriate and relevant courses by our providers, yet remain empty.

We have also identified within North Wales that we need a further 23% of new people in professional occupations within the energy and environment sector up to 2024; 13% regionally in terms of bricklayers up to 2022; 12% more compared to the current workforce in painters and decorators; and an increase of 7% for civil engineers.

All parts of the health and social care sector in North Wales continue to face significant skills and staffing issues, not aided by the uncertainty on Brexit, and the considerable reliance on EU migrant staff to undertake roles not able to be filled by the regional domiciled labour market. Staffing and skills shortages within the health sector in North Wales have seen BCUHB spending on locum staff double between 2012 and 2016 (6.3% of all labour costs on non-permanent staff) further emphasising the issues on recruitment and retention within this sector area.

One of the main barriers into employment amongst the 16-24 NEET population in North Wales is mental health. Working through our RSP initiated ESF project, ADTRAC, findings in consultation with partner organisations including Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, have identified that issues connected to mental health that impact on an individuals capacity into making decisions about education, training and or employment become barriers to employability. However, the project is working innovatively to remove these barriers by providing counselling, therapy and interventions bespoke to identified individuals.

To support general employability promotion and understanding, we have worked with DWP, Careers Wales, and GwE, alongside employers such as Harlech Foods, Griffiths Civils, and Horizon Nuclear Power, to develop an online resource and video to promote to schools across North Wales, that captures the views of employers and their expectations. This further cements our closer relationship as an RSP working with the regional schools consortia, GwE, to help shape and develop the proposals for the new curriculum that reflect the voice of employers, future skills needs, and greater vocational skills to support a more round employability approach.

Section 17: Schools & Local Education Authorities

The Regional Skills Partnership in North Wales has worked hard with education providers and leaders responsible for schools to build, maintain, and enhance a relationship that promotes the importance of skills and employment pathways within schools across the region, and the development of the curriculum, locally, regionally, and nationally.

We have ensured that there is representation at the RSP from the 14-19 Coordinators, Regional EPCs and GwE on the RSP Workstream, as well as local authority representation to cascade information to Local Authority Education Departments.

The RSP Regional Programme Manager (Skills & Employment) is an Advisory Board member of the Regional Schools Education Consortium, GwE, which allows for opportunities to discuss and highlight relevant opportunities to discuss and highlight relevant issues, with the Director of GwE in return, being a member of the RSP Board.

Closer collaboration with GwE over the last 12 months, following the success of ACT ON STEM has allowed the RSP to present work to the regional Pioneer Schools, and work with them directly to help inform and direct future curriculum planning, based on future skills and employment needs. This includes continued work on the development of pilot modules in line with the region's efforts to develop and deliver Successful Futures.

Work we as an RSP have led on with education partners since 2015 on identifying support for those at risk of becoming NEETS aged 16-24, has seen further updates in collaboration with education and schools partners. We have recently undertaken a review of our Support and Provision database of regional provision for this cohort in collaboration with the region's 6 local authority EPCs and attended partner events to promote and update this online interactive, and freely available resource that includes promotion of vocational learning.

Our continued engagement with schools across a broad variety of inter-related themes is increasingly important as part of our focus as an RSP on alignment of the future workforce, with the needs of our regional economy.

A summary of our recent interactions, support, and collaboration with schools and education partners (pre-16) in the last year includes the following:

- In addition to our delivery of 'ACT on STEM' to all 360 primary schools, we continue to actively promote this at formal teacher training events across the region.
- Developed a mapping tool for teachers for the Welsh Bacalaureate with Careers Wales, GwE and Horizon Nuclear Power.
- Working directly with GwE to develop the STEM Gogledd Challenge Adviser Role going forward over the next 4 years.
- Close collaboration and sponsorship from GwE in the development of the Regional Welsh Language in the Workplace in north Wales Report and Conference.
- We were one of the key development partners to arrange and host a SEREN Students Graduate Careers Conference and series of regional seminars.
- Key delivery partner for the PROFI programme for regional 6th form students, with us as an RSP delivering sessions for students on options for work and future in North Wales, and sponsoring the competition and prize for 'Your Future is Bright in North Wales' category of the PROFI programme.

Section 18: Higher Education

Both of our regional Universities, Bangor and Wrexham Glyndwr, in addition to the Open University, currently engage with the Regional Skills Partnership very effectively and on multiple levels. Both Vice Chancellors of Wrexham Glyndwr and Bangor University are currently on the North Wales Economic Ambition Board, and senior officers and Pro Vice Chancellors routinely represent their respective institutions within the Regional Skills Partnership, and our working groups to support the work on the collective development for example, of the North Wales Growth Bid, to support the regions economy & skills needs, as well as its businesses post Brexit.

All three higher education partners routinely input into the annual Skills & Employment Plan for the region, with widespread engagement and promotion across all departments, both internally within academic focused areas of delivery, as well as externally focused departments that support businesses and community engagement.

This strong and productive collaboration between our higher education partners has resulted in our RSP Programme Manager providing routine guest lectures annually since 2015 to students at Bangor University on regional labour

market trends and opportunities within North Wales, whilst Wrexham Glyndwr have integrated the NWEAB Skills and Employment Plan within their University Strategic Framework (2015-2020) to align their central commitments to the strategic direction promoted by the RSP.

Originated by the RSP and facilitated in partnership during its development, our higher education providers are now working collectively with further education across the region, as part of the ESF funded, 'North Wales Business Academy' which provides successful provision of flexible learning HE credits for employers wishing to grow their business and seeking specific support, advice, inspiration and problem solving to challenges and barriers to growth.

Whilst using the key and growth sectors within the Skills Plan to target businesses to engage, the project extends an open welcome to all businesses to promote higher level skills in preparing employers to invest in succession planning for their managerial staff, where there is a likely skills gap during the next 10-15 years due to the ageing workforce, and to remain competitive and sustainable following Brexit.

Both Bangor and Wrexham Glyndwr have well established partnerships with many other education providers from across the region and cross border. From Partnership and Franchise agreements with Grwp Llandrillo Menai, Coleg Cambria and Memorandum of Understanding agreements with other universities such as Aberystwyth, both also maintain positive and proactive relationships with Sixth Form Colleges and Schools across the region.

Reflecting the support for our cross border economy and labour market, Wrexham Glyndwr due to their location, also work closely with partners across the border into the North West with established relationships with Universities such as Wolverhampton and Chester (specifically for PhD provision) and within Wales with colleagues and providers in South Wales such as Trinity St David's and Cardiff Metropolitan.

Both Universities are keen to work with more providers across Wales especially in relation to the apprenticeship development and ensuring that the skills agenda is met. Bangor University works in close collaboration with Grwp Llandrillo Menai in various projects such as on the delivery of HE modules in the Management Centre, North Wales Business Academy and accreditation of most of GLIMs HE provision.

In terms of 'other education providers' both Universities collaborate and engage with "Reaching Wider" and deliver sessions in primary schools which builds on the existing close working collaboration and partnership between both universities and GwE, the regional education consortium for schools, aided by the RSP, to support additional areas around capacity building and planning initial teacher training and placements.

The Open University also works with 'Seren' students in Wales; a programme that is sponsored by Welsh Government, where year 12 and 13 students get the opportunity to undertake short OU modules alongside their A levels, as a way of developing HE level skills and enhancing their university applications. Whilst numbers in North Wales are currently low, the expectation following only its second year of delivery, is that will grow as a greater emphasis on employability and the links to the higher education sector and business is promoted more consistently.

Over 70% of provision within both our regional based Universities, are aligned to the key and growth sectors identified within previous annual Skills & Employment Plans, and the offer of support for higher level skills needs being addressed, reflects the RSP priorities, but also the engagement directly with the development of the North Wales Growth Deal opportunities, and the responses to key project developments and investments across the region such as Wylfa Newydd, the AMRI at Deeside, and other projects such as the Menai Science Park and proposed expansion of OpTIC, that promote STEM skills particularly.

Both regional Universities and the OU had put a significant amount of resources into developing degree apprenticeship programmes for Engineering and Computing, with the identification and development of facilities and approaches in line with the WG and HEFCW approach. This included as a region with our HEI's supported by the RSP, developing the projected outcomes of the two pilots which ranged from an additional 200+ STEM based graduates from the region by 2024, to the associated developments with employers in developing bespoke complimentary support packages in addition to the degree apprenticeships.

Whilst welcoming the confirmation of the Digital & ICT Degree Apprenticeships (to commence in Oct 2018) which does reflect one of identified growth sectors within the RSP Plans from 2016 onwards, there is disappointment by partners that the proposals for Engineering being postponed for 2018, will mean a reduction (and in some cases cancellation) of training and development for key staff as budgets for September entry had already been set; increased costs for our HEI's as many partners had invested significant time to the co-production of the programmes aligned to the pilot; and a nervousness and decreased appetite for engaging with similar pilots in the future.

A Postgraduate Diploma programme in Adult Nursing introduced by Bangor University is the first course of its kind in North Wales. It offers recent graduates of life and social science a fast-track two-year route to registration with the Nursing and Midwifery Council. The new postgraduate course meets a growing need within the region, reflecting the RSP Plan with 'Health & Social Care' as a growth sector based on demands and builds on the partnership with Betsi Cadwaladr to deliver new medical courses from 2019.

During 2017-18, the RSP has supported and input directly into a Cross-border HE Skills Focus Group chaired by Professor Maria Hinfelaar of Wrexham Glyndwr University. From this work by Bangor, Wrexham Glyndwr and Chester Universities, using the Regional Skills Plan as a template, a detailed multi-year analysis of the subject awards, and destination of graduates aligned to the Regional Skills Plan, has been undertaken.

Engagement with employers at an initial event held in Money Penny will further be developed and discussed at an RSP supported cross border Skills and Innovation Summit in collaboration with the Mersey Dee Alliance, planned for Autumn 2018 covering issues including support for 'human capital'; demonstrating best practice in collaboration between industry, academia and the wider community to support regional development agendas; and how HEI's can promote skills within an economy that supports the concept of 'Place' and 'localised industrial strategies'.

Section 19: Occupational Trends & Challenges

One of the most significant trends facing North Wales is how to further raise the ambition of individuals, employers and communities collectively, in aspiring to improve their skills and qualifications appropriately to meet our current and future economic demands.

If we are to eliminate the current qualifications and skills gap between Wales and the rest of Europe, in addition to providing greater equality of opportunity for those who are disabled, currently removed from the labour market, or long term disengaged, we need clarity collectively through a common voice and mechanism such as the Regional Skills Partnership, to further promote opportunities, pathways into employment, and the promotion and development of additional skills to maintain our digital competence as a region in response to further automation and Industry 4.0.

However, one of the most important actions in response to general occupational trends, is that we as a region, must prepare and upskill people for jobs we know are going to be there; we should not raise aspiration, and invest in delivery on speculation, and risk disengagement and disillusion in the short to medium term. The delivery of the region to support skills and employment supply, should be as a catalyst in response to known demands.

In North Wales, where we have identified our three key sectors, and five growth sectors, we have worked with RSP partners, and industry representative bodies to maintain a barometer on current and future trends for skills and employment developments within these sectors – many of which cumulatively, form the foundation economy, which equates to 41% of the current working population in North Wales.

Complimentary to Working Futures data upto 2024, the region has identified an increase in demand both currently, and in the future, for higher level occupations, such as managers, professionals and associate professionals within

the Energy & Environment sector; with the county of Gwynedd experiencing the highest proportion of jobs growth within this sector at almost 38% during the last five years, closely followed by Conwy and Denbighshire at 37%.

Whilst skilled trades and occupations continue to have the largest share of employment in North Wales, there is a sustained demand for low level occupations, such as process, plant and machine operatives and elementary occupations, which will be further promoted once projects such as the construction of Wylfa Newydd commences. Yet, there is also a risk to these latter occupations from both increasing automation, and the impact of Brexit should key anchors leave the UK and North Wales.

It is already well documented in our previous years Skills Plans, and national industry bodies whom we continue to engage with such as ECITB, CITB, and FMB Cymru, that with the prospect of Wylfa Newydd construction, we face a shortage of key skills and roles such as steel fixers and scaffolders; but will also see gaps in broader roles such as carpentry, electricians, bricklayers, and civils personnel, due to displacement and movement of labour from elsewhere within the region. However, we will see increasing demands for higher levelled skilled roles such as civil engineers, surveyors, and associated project and supervisory management roles for the sector requiring QCF Levels 4-8.

The changing occupational composition in the creative industries from 1994 up to 2024 shows considerable growth in high level occupations, such as managers, professionals and associate professionals. The majority of employees in this sector are highly skilled and educated to degree level, and with increased mobility and the ability to work from home, we continue to see a steady increase in those within this sector being self-employed and working remotely, whilst established digital and media employers in North Wales, continue to attract and the support the development of new entrants – utilising their digital and creative skills to further advance their business outputs and opportunities. Further developments in established creative centres of excellence such as Theatr Clwyd with their expansion plans to create incubation hubs for start-ups, and recent developments such as Pontio in Bangor, all collectively further cement the growing trend for this sector across North Wales – also promoting the importance of the Welsh language in significant proportions of their output.

One of our most high-profile growth sectors which is facing recruitment challenges from recruitment, retention, and poor promotion, is Health & Social Care. Working with Betsi Cadwaladar University Health Board, the RSP has been able to obtain and analyse information which illustrates that there are almost 4,000 vacancies for health professionals within the region at all levels. In addition, there are a significant number of workers within the social care arm of the wider sector, that will need training in order to meet registration requirements under the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016. This will potentially place further resource implications on a sector already impacted by a fragile provider market and may change the demographics of the workforce.

However, as a growth sector, we are seeing the industry, providers, and the third sector in the region, work collaboratively to promote the breadth of opportunities within the sector – particularly within social care, where we continue to address the misconceptions about the nature of employment and roles previously associated within the sector. RSP leads have attended meetings of regional sector leads to discuss and promote the skills agenda, alongside regional providers in collaboration with sector leads, are looking to promote how technology and innovation are moving the sector upwards in terms of more professional and skilled roles being required with a need for more focused and better promoted career pathways to attract and retain greater numbers.

The challenges therefore we have identified as a region working across all sectors, and reflecting the effects to associated sectors and supply chains of large scale investments such as Wylfa Newydd and other factors, include:

- Need an increase in provision and promotion for short term nuclear FE courses
- With new WBL provision for scaffolders already planned, we need to see associated increases in technical professions to support key sectors
- We need support to promote and deliver STEM associated higher WBL outputs and build on the pilot of current Degree Apprenticeships in Digital to extend to engineering, construction, and energy related sectors

- Following the publication of our RSP regional Welsh Language Skills in the North Wales Economy report, we need support to further promote the language as key employability skill across all levels of occupations and sectors in the region
- Need further support for employers in NE Wales and providers to address issues around the impact of the Apprenticeship Levy
- Recent developments on the new provision by Bangor University is welcomed, but we need greater promotion of opportunity, progression, and retention of staff sourced from within North Wales across the broader Health & Social Care sector in the region

Section 20: Green Growth

The Regional Skills Partnership in North Wales, welcomes the changes to the Welsh Guidance following our challenge, that the original ask of RSP's to discuss with employers "a wider approach to promoting sustainable development and low carbon initiatives", was not in our core remit, was duplicative of other Welsh Government departments and their dedicated officials, and that we did not have the resources to do this work outside of our skills portfolio.

We support the promotion of Green Growth, and continue to recognise as in previous years Plans, the relevance of this agenda to be promoted by Welsh Government amongst employers and providers by their dedicated officers, for whom we will offer additional information, subject to availability and relevance to our core remit, and limited resources.

The Well Being of Future Generations Act has placed Public Service Boards responsible for capturing this data on a local authority basis and should have generated examples and case studies on this for the Welsh Government. The RSP is a non-statutory representative body of the 6 Local Authorities, 2 HE Institutions and 2 FE Institutions in the Region and therefore is represented by the actions and evidence of its partner organisations.

There are a number of individual obligations which RSP members adhere to in the context of the decarbonisation agenda; such as: switching lights off, recycling, car sharing, paperless meetings, skype meetings etc. Responses from the Welsh Government's own survey in December 2017 suggests that employers however need further clarification to define the terminology and clearer measures in order to achieve a carbon neutral aim.

A number of responses in the WG call for feedback highlighted achieving this target would require incentives, penalties and support, and may require specific legislation to ensure it was given sufficient impetus for delivery. The RSP does not hold specific information and data as evidence for this, and does not have the resources to do this additional work.

The public sector, led by Welsh Government and local authorities particularly, has a role in stimulating the market for environmentally beneficial products through its procurement activities. From initial ongoing discussions with North Wales employers, it is increasingly obvious that there is a need for better communication and awareness raising on how to complete on-line forms and submitting bids successfully which incorporate elements aligned to environmental practices, and green growth.

The biggest barrier to taking action to improve the energy efficiency of businesses in North Wales is knowing where to get the reliable advice to identify the best measures to install. Relatively small investments in energy efficiency measures can result in dramatic reductions in consumption and bills – having a significant impact on many small businesses running costs.

We are aware that in North Wales, British Gas worked with Toyota in Deeside to launch a solar array in 2015, to substantially reduce manufacturing costs at the plant, whilst parallel activities have seen successful public sector

projects to install roof-top solar PV in most hospitals, schools, colleges, universities and other elements of the public estate in North Wales.

Section 21: Welsh Language

North Wales is the first region in Wales to have delivered and published a dedicated document that provides a detailed overview of the Welsh Language and its use and promotion as a recognised skills within the workplace, and a key contributor to the local and regional economy.

Our bespoke report titled, 'Welsh Language at Work in North Wales', brings together the latest statistics on the Welsh language, focusing on key areas such as the workplace, education, training, Welsh Government policy and regional support for the Welsh language as an employability skill.

The report presents a clear assessment of the current situation of the Welsh language in North Wales and identifies gaps in provision, in certain sectors, as well as providing challenges for partners and stakeholders in the region to consider how to channel regional efforts and work smarter in the future.

The Welsh language is a key part of North Wales vibrant culture across workplaces, learning institutions and everyday life, with employers particularly, now placing greater emphasis on, and recognising, the importance of bilingual skills; particularly in sectors with greater public engagement and access.

In North Wales, the Welsh language is already the first language used in many workplaces, and we continue to see a demand for increased use of the language in many of the growth sectors identified within our Skills Plan – food & drink; tourism & hospitality; health & social care; and creative & digital. The language in each of these sectors helps to contribute as a key economic driver, boosting client and customer engagement as applicable, and promoting stronger communities.

In North Wales, each of our HE & FE providers continues to offer an increasing number of their courses both vocational and accredited, through the Welsh language, and other national bodies such as NTFW and their network of private training providers within the region, are working to promote work based learning provision through the medium of Welsh, with improved training, support and resources available. However, the bilingual skills of tutors and assessors to upskill and train our workforce, is an issue that will grow without further support.

One of the aims of the report is to facilitate regional and more collaborative efforts towards the Welsh Government's target of reaching one million Welsh speakers by 2050, and details clearly (see appendix) the current overview of the use and promotion of the Welsh language across education (schools, colleges, universities); work based learning (apprenticeships & training); and within the workplace, based on direct input and testimonials from employers across North Wales.

The Welsh language at work in North Wales report was successfully launched on 11 April, 2018, at Porth Eirias in Colwyn Bay by the Regional Skills Partnership with stakeholders present who had contributed to the report including, GwE; the Welsh Language Commissioner; Horizon Nuclear Power; Menter a Busnes; Griffiths Engineering; Careers Wales; NTFW; North Wales Police; Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board; Zip World; Harlech Food Services; and the Welsh Government's Welsh Language Unit.

This was a consultation event where there were specific outcomes and recommendations, all of which the Regional Skills Partnership will continue to evaluate and implement as required in partnership and consultation.

Section 22: Conclusions & Recommendations

Partners across North Wales have already begun a process of change and response to previous Skills & Employment Plans published during the last three years which means as a region, we can clearly demonstrate connectivity and responsiveness to our shared skills agenda aligned to economic demands and opportunities.

As a result of the content identified within this report, the Regional Skills Partnership in North Wales will continue to support and influence the North Wales Growth Vision and its focus on skills development as an essential factor for achieving the objective of ‘decent work’ both by improving lifelong learning of skills to increase the productivity and sustainability of enterprises, whilst also supporting the skills needed for digitalisation and automation to help improve working conditions and the employability of workers.

Consistent with our 2017 Regional Skills & Employment Plan for North Wales, we continue the need to promote that the primary longer term challenge for skills and employment is how we address a workforce replacement demand gap rather than a skills gap, whilst continuing to promote a greater awareness of digital skills across all sectors, and enabling accessibility for all cohorts of our current and potential labour market into sustainable career pathways.

Therefore, we know that the primary and challenges and requirements for North Wales to address, are:

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|--|
| An ageing workforce with skills disappearing through retirement. |
| A requirement to upskill the existing workforce as well as increase entry points for younger workers |
| An alignment of the training opportunities with job vacancies – e.g. STEM, digital, automation, etc. |
| Joined-up careers and advice services to our major projects that are pipelined/timetabled so as to gain the maximum legacy for the region |

Therefore, in 2019 we will publish a three-year Regional Skills & Employment Plan for North Wales, that will provide a clear longer term focus for the region until 2022, that will be widely consulted on during composition, agreed and signed off by both the Regional Skills Partnership and North Wales Economic Ambition Board, and clearly aligned to the delivery and implementation of projects & actions within the North Wales Growth Deal, whilst addressing longer term issues associated with the cessation of our regional European funded skills projects by 2022-23.

During the tenure of this three year Regional Skills & Employment Plan for North Wales, we will be able to monitor progress effectively on key actions, identify challenges and progress, and be able to work more effectively on a longer term vision which partners will benefit from in its provision of greater clarity, which the current annual process does not promote.

The aspirations already identified for consideration in our 2019-22 three year document for publication in the Autumn of 2019, builds on the considerable work undertaken in the 2017 Plan, and the headlines captured within this summary report as required and specified by Welsh Government. The current intended areas of future focus include the following areas and issues:

- To support our further education colleges, universities and work-based learning providers across North Wales in identifying new opportunities of funding post Brexit, to undertake bespoke research and innovation that supports employers and their employees, aligned to the economic and skills demands for our region

- To work with our education providers at all levels, to promote greater employability amongst the future workforce across the region, that complements the national Working Wales agenda, but also reflects our bespoke needs aligned to the impact of projects such as Wylfa Newydd, and the displacement of labour
- To build on the opportunities of programmes such as the Skills Development Fund, to work collectively as a region to support participation, completion and progression, especially for underrepresented groups, that provides further access to lifelong learning; particularly in relation to technical skills for adult learners
- To develop the legacy of our current European funded regional skills projects that support those furthest from the jobs market with issues including disability, mental and other physical health issues, by helping to remove barriers to employment that will support all, to find sustainable, good quality jobs in our region
- To continue to align to the North Wales Growth Vision in supporting delivery of skills that as a region, positions us as one of the leading UK locations for energy generation and energy related supply chain investment, with expertise in low carbon technologies and processes; in addition to capitalising on the strong network of anchor companies with an international profile to build an advanced manufacturing cluster
- To further support the development of centres of excellence aligned to our existing key and growth sectors from the 2017 Regional Skills & Employment Plan, and the opportunities they represent to support future and current labour market participants in access to leading digital and technology excellence for their sectors
- To continue the role and impact of the Regional Skills Partnership in North Wales to support our partners in a connected vision to support the current and future skills requirements of our region, that promotes the needs of the needs and demands of the private sector, with the support of our providers in upskilling our current and future supply via greater accessibility, inclusivity, and digital awareness.