

north wales economic ambition board

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Meeting:	North Wales Regional Skills Partnership (Venue: Coleg Llandrillo, Rhos)	Date:	03-05-2018
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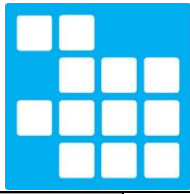
Present:
Horizon Nuclear Power – Sasha Davies (Chair) NWEAB – Iwan Thomas, Ffion Jones, Katie Edwards, Welsh Government – Jayne Roberts; Local Government – Sioned Williams; North Wales 14-19 – Christine Wynn; Careers Wales – Nerys Bourne, Chris Brayshay; DWP – Bev Lovatt; Grwp Llandrillo Menai – James Nelson; Coleg Cambria – Sue Price; CITB – Ceri Jones; Bangor University – Bryn Jones;;; North Wales Tourism – Jim Jones; Wrexham Glyndwr University – Julie Cowley; NTFW – Ruth Collinge; North Wales Social Care & Health Workforce Board – Alison Atkinson; Airbus – Darren Collins; Regional Engagement Team – Barbara Burchill; Open University in Wales – Gayle Hudson; AVOW – John Gallanders

Apologies:
GwE – Arwyn Thomas; North Wales & Mersey Dee Business Council – Ashley Rogers; West Cheshire & North Wales Chamber – Colin Brew; FSB – Mike Learmond; Open University in Wales – Kevin Pascoe; WCVA – Catherine Miller; Welsh Government – Meurig Thomas; Creative North Wales – Garffild Lewis; EPC – Alice Williams; Airbus – Gavin Jones;

Item No.	1.
Title:	Welcome and Apologies
Comments:	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received as noted above with noted alternates and substitutes being present at this meeting. The Chair also thanked our hosts at Grwp Llandrillo Menai and noted the excellent attendance to support discussions.

Item No.	2.
Title:	Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 March 2018
Comments:	<p>Noted that following the previous meeting on 16 March, that an invitation be sent to Gwenllian Roberts at WG to come back to the next RSP meeting in June, and to update on the Regional Economic Action Plan for the region, to help align and synergise with the Regional Skills Plan for 2018-19, and that we are here to help and collaborate as required.</p> <p>It was also noted that following the presentation from Qualifications Wales at the previous meeting, the regional response to the national consultation was included in the meeting pack for information.</p> <p>No further issues were raised, and was noted that actions highlighted would be addressed during the agenda items to follow</p>
Decision:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The minutes were accepted• Gwenllian Roberts to be invited to discuss the Regional Economic Action Plan• Andrew Clarke and/or Claire Maxwell invited to attend this meeting were unavailable, and would be requested to attend the next one.

Item No.	3.
Title:	Key Update & Discussion – North Wales Growth Deal – ‘Resilience’ Theme/Aim
Comments:	<p>The Chair introduced Sioned Williams as Vice Chair to provide a welcome update on the skills projects developed within the Growth Deal which key RSP colleagues had already been involved in as part of their development to date.</p> <p>Sioned welcomed the opportunity following the previous meeting in March, to have more time to present and discuss, but made a clear offer that further detailed discussions were to be offered and delivered with the RSP and its partners to support and challenge the development of the proposals.</p> <p>The majority of the skills focused projects falls under the ‘Aim’ of ‘Resilience’ for the Growth Deal Bid proposals – the other two aims under which other projects are captured, are “Smart” and “Connected”. However, Sioned made clear that projects do not sit in isolation – there is a complementarity and support with projects in the other two Aims as well.</p> <p>The role for the RSP is to help lead and shape these projects within the skills focused “Resilience” theme – either directly through the main RSP group as current, or potentially through two focused sub groups (Pathways to Skills & Employment / Centres of Excellence).</p> <p>Collectively, all the project proposals within the Growth Bid are to make sure we have the right skills for industry in the region, and a sustainable skills pathway for individuals as a result.</p>



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PATHWAY TO SKILLS & EMPLOYMENT – the “Gateway” will help to make sure we have a common system in the region to bring partners together to plan effectively – building on examples of best practice already delivered – including the RSP led, brokerage service to support the construction of HMP Berwyn, and now, the collaboration to support Wylfa Newydd.

The premise is clear in that we want the correct information to go to the right people, and that whilst there is good practice by companies with schools, it is piecemeal, and the responses from schools can vary.

What has been developed so far, is a high level business case, and more work now needed on the detail. A question from Sasha Davies (Chair) on how will we be making sure we collaborate and include all sizes of businesses, especially smaller businesses, was responded to by Sioned that we would definitely be planning to engage with smaller businesses as they do form the majority of the total number across the region.

The second project in this Programme (Pathway to...) is the “Employability Pathway” which will target groups of people furthest away from the labour market – building on the good work of the current ESF funded regional projects which will be coming to an end in early 2020’s. This new Pathway will have less restrictions than those current ESF projects but can continue their best practice to make a genuine and sustainable difference to those needing assistance.

Julie Cowley asked how these will work alongside WG Working Wales, to which Sioned made clear we will be working with WG to deliver collectively in the region, with the potential for North Wales to become a pilot possibly; a point confirmed by Jayne Roberts from WG based on a previous presentation by Edwyn Williams from WG to the RSP.

CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE – there will be four currently proposed, of which three are more advanced.

The first is for “Tourism” and will be based at the Rhos campus of GLLM to promote higher level and wider industry skills in the sector. Jim Jones confirmed the industry was involved and supportive of this project, and builds on the existing virtual academy which the industry has led to date.

The second is the “Renewable Energy Centre” based at Llysfas as it becomes a ‘carbon neutral farm’, and led by Coleg Cambria. It will include support for renewable energy and precision technology to support agriculture and the rural economy – complementing the proposals in place for Glynllifon in the west of the region, so collectively North Wales will be ready to meet and support future challenges for the rural sector in general.

The third is for “Rail” and will be based at Rhyl, and already has the support of Network Rail who have supplied equipment to begin upskilling and training. The project plan in detail is still yet to be developed but already has considerable support, and will also provide a welcome boost to an area of key deprivation and economic inactivity in the region.

The fourth is around “STEM Development Centre(s)” based on a proposal initiated and led to date by Airbus – on which the RSP received a presentation in January. Since this time, it has been discussed that it should be extended to include partners in the west of the region, and both GLLM and Horizon Nuclear have provided verbal support. Although this is currently at concept stage, the RSP has already sent a letter of support to WG on the principles and projected outcomes authored by Airbus, for this project.

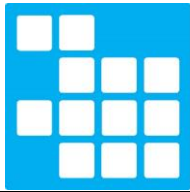
Sasha Davies also commented that the firm ‘Babcock’ on Anglesey would be a good partner to become involved, and welcomed a broader inclusion to support the Airbus proposal, from companies and partners across North Wales.

Sioned then confirmed that discussions at the Joint Committee had considered how to rank the projects in order of importance, but decided that all would go forward currently. The Committee was also now looking to commission the RSP to undertake some bespoke analysis on their behalf:

- 1) Look to develop a proposal on supporting the digital skills sector across the region
- 2) Look at collating an overview of the different evidence bases currently in existence to provide a single overview of the Health & Social Care sector in the region
- 3) Look at how we can assist in developing the current STEM project proposal past the concept stage
- 4) Look at possibly undertaking an evaluation and overview of all major capital projects in the region, and their employability options

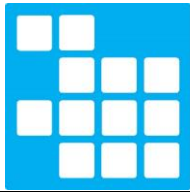
With our RSP Chair now on the Joint Committee, there is a clear and transparent link which can be used effectively to drive our common agenda and deliver on expectations.

Bryn Jones welcomed the diagram used within the RSP meeting pack, and noted that HE featured in many of the proposed projects in general – with particular note to the innovation hubs.



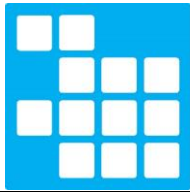
	<p>Alison Atkinson welcomed the RSP and Growth Bid both highlighting the Health & Social Care sector, and noted the current sector workforce Strategy that had been produced which captures the current skills market of the sector across North Wales.</p> <p>Sioned Williams and colleagues welcomed this, but made clear that through the RSP and the Growth Deal proposals, it was not simply about what we need in terms of skills, which each sector was good at promoting, but through the RSP, to identify how, we can now collectively as a region through all applicable partners, to address it.</p> <p>The Chair, Sasha Davies, and Programme Manager Iwan Thomas both agreed and noted that having the current overview is great, but the RSP needs to now through its membership, look at how we can do things differently.</p> <p>Iwan Thomas suggested that we could in time, develop similar appendices for both Health & Social Care, and Tourism, based on the previously delivered document for Welsh Language Skills, and currently as we are undertaking for construction on Wylfa.</p> <p>John Gallanders also highlighted that projects would also need, where applicable, to address the low pay situation within many jobs and sectors, and that the shift in workforce in terms of numbers increasingly required to fill vacancies, cannot be underestimated.</p> <p>Following a lengthy debate and discussion, the Chair thanked Sioned for leading this key item, and for all the contributions by partners, with confirmation that further details would follow to share with partners, and that the RSP would be supporting the Joint Committee and welcomes the commissions of specific analysis and work to support the wider Growth Bid work.</p>
Decision:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACTION 3.1 – The project outlines developed to date would be circulated to RSP colleagues and partners with the minutes for their information • ACTION 3.2 – Each project sponsor for each of the Centres of Excellence to present to future meetings of the RSP in turn to update partners on developments and seek support where applicable for further input and assistance • ACTION 3.3 – Link to the Health & Social Care Workforce Strategy to be circulated to RSP colleagues and partners: https://www.northwalescollaborative.wales/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/NW-SCHC-Workforce-En.pdf

Item No.	4.
Title:	Education Business Exchange Project – Careers Wales
Comments:	<p>The Chair welcomed and introduced Nerys Bourne and Chris Brayshay from Careers Wales to deliver a presentation and lead the discussion on the above new project.</p> <p>Nerys set the scene by explaining that the Exchange was responding to challenges regionally and nationally, particularly in response to skills needs of employers, and that Careers Wales welcomes trialling it here in North Wales.</p> <p>Chris Brayshay began the formal presentation with a brief video promotion developed by CW which was available in both Welsh and English language versions.</p> <p>The project which is an online tool, support the four purposes of the new curriculum, and will enable the enrichment of the careers curriculum particularly.</p> <p>It will help to develop and explore partnerships between local, national, and international employers with schools, and identify the right partnerships for both teachers and schools individually.</p> <p>As an online tool primarily, it will centralise and structure the provision for participants and be further aided by the use of live webinars to engage and inform further.</p> <p>Building up the database will be key and schools are also encourage to suggest who they would like to see approached on the database – particularly companies who are lesser known that the “usual suspects”.</p> <p>There are a number of benefits to the organisations involved – including aiding CPD for employees and staff as they prepare knowledge exchange and workplace skills to be promoted to the future workforce. CW see this singular national approach, replacing an ad-hoc previous approach and have therefore just completed a second pilot phase with 62 schools; including those in Wrexham, Denbighshire, and North Gwynedd.</p> <p>A further 60 schools will be added this year including the rest of Gwynedd, and schools in Flintshire, with the aim that all schools will have access to, and be participants by the academic year 2019-20.</p>



	<p>It was highlighted that whilst the technology is great, it is important to get teachers on board and supportive, as well as a broad range of employers who want to participate, but also see the benefits involved for them too.</p> <p>A question from Gayle at the Open University on how it is being evaluated was responded by Chris in that it is ongoing during the pilot phase, and has helped to inform the next stage, with clarity gained on exactly how the system is being used by participants.</p> <p>Julie Cowley asked about what engagement there had been with other education partners on the promotion of pathways for participants, to which Chris responded that the system was more of a brokerage service, but acknowledged that pathways had to be correct and linked.</p> <p>Nerys also confirmed that business ambassador training is being offered by employers by CW.</p> <p>Sue Price commented that whilst this was a welcome development, we had to be mindful that pupils, schools, and others did not get bombarded with another system or project – there needs to be connectivity and complementarity across the region.</p>
Decision:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACTION 4.1 – partners to continue to receive updates on this project within North Wales from Careers Wales colleagues at future meetings of the Regional Skills Partnership

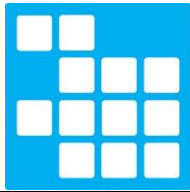
Item No.	5.
Title:	Regional Skills & Employment Update & Discussion
Comments:	<p>Sasha Davies introduced this item to be led by Iwan Thomas, who went onto explain there were three main updates to be shared and discussed by partners.</p> <p>The first item was concerning the recent launch of the RSP's Welsh Language Skills Report held at Porth Eirias. Feedback and coverage has been extremely positive and the links to the online versions have already been shared with all partners.</p> <p>Thanks were extended to all who attended the event and entered into discussions, the outcomes of which will be placed into a formal report which will also include a full audit of all current groups meeting across the region to discuss and promote Welsh Language issues.</p> <p>Since our document has been published and promoted, Welsh Government have commended this work, and have now called a meeting of the three RSP's in Wales together, to see what can be learnt from our outputs in North Wales, to inform a collective approach across Welsh language skills issues in Wales.</p> <p>Iwan noted that further remaining hard copies of the report were available at the end of the meeting, and extended thanks again to both Ffion Jones and Katie Edwards for undertaking the work on this project.</p> <p>The second item was in reference to the Regional Skills Plan for 2018-19. Following recent discussions with WG officials and other RSP's in Llandrindod Wells in mid April, WG had now issued formal guidance in terms of a template they wish to see completed capturing the information they need, from all Skills Plans in Wales. This will provide for WG, greater consistency and comparison opportunities in a more rigid format that will help inform their policy, delivery, and budget allocations.</p> <p>Iwan noted that whilst we are supportive to provide WG with the information they need, and will do so, we also needed to reflect on the needs of our regional audience, who increasingly use the Plan as key reference tool for a variety of actions – but primarily a key resource of information and intelligence relating to North Wales specifically.</p> <p>It was confirmed that the Plan would this year, be an update and refresh of that produced last year, but would look to be refined into a smaller document compared to previous incarnations.</p> <p>Following on from the specific appendix on Welsh Language Skills which was elevated into a standalone report as noted above, this year, there would be a dedicated appendix looking at the construction workforce requirements for Wylfa Newydd.</p> <p>A copy of the proposal document originally discussed and agreed with the Horizon Construction Skills Coordination Group (21 March) was included within the meeting pack for partners, and outlines two key areas of information be collated – one, on the current workforce, and secondly, the workforce in waiting.</p> <p>This appendix would be completed around the same time as the completion of the Regional Skills Plan at the end of July/start of August, and partners made no objections to completing this work.</p>



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	<p>The Chair noted that further engagement with employers particularly should happen in the next few weeks alongside work on developing the new Plan; building on the work with employers individually undertaken in previous years. A collective group meeting and discussion may be more beneficial. Partners agreed with this approach, and it was confirmed that a draft for partners to comment on, would be circulated at the end of June and then discussed at the next RSP meeting on 29 June.</p> <p>The third main update was on the proposed Skills Development Fund that is being provided as an opportunity by Welsh Government via the Regional Skills Partnerships. A full summary paper was included within the Meeting Pack for partners.</p> <p>North Wales has been allocated upto £2.2m for delivery by Further Education partners during the 2018-19 academic year, as identified and endorsed by the Regional Skills Partnership.</p> <p>Discussion by partners concerned if we could look at part-time provision in areas that would impact sectors more aligned to the 'Foundation Economy' within the Regional Skills Plan.</p> <p>Iwan Thomas also supported this as it would enable us to address potential gaps that we know exist, and enable our FE partners to target key foundation sectors with provision that is more flexible.</p> <p>Partners agreed that offering courses outside of working hours (evenings, weekends, etc) would enable those currently working, to upskill in areas such as digital skills, which are increasingly needed in all sectors.</p> <p>Both FEI's welcomed the opportunity to work on proposals with partners, and was agreed that those partners around the table who wanted to input their suggestions, would do so by sending to Iwan Thomas directly by Friday 11th May to collate. A meeting will then be arranged between RSP team leads and FE partners the following week to discuss next steps and work collectively on submissions into Welsh Government.</p> <p>Timescales were acknowledged as being very tight, with the guidance only sent from WG to partners on 25th April, with expected submission at end of May. However, Iwan Thomas to contact WG to see if an extension could be obtained due to the end of May bank holiday and half term impact on colleagues availability.</p>
<p>Decision:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACTION 5.1 – A report on the outcomes of discussions and progress on actions relating to the Welsh Language Skills document to be circulated in advance of the next RSP meeting and be discussed at that same meeting on 29 June. • ACTION 5.2 – Further to the above action, a full audit of all Welsh language groups to be collated and included within the report, with the recommendation that all be brought together to meet, championed by the RSP • ACTION 5.3 – RSP team to proceed with completing a Wylfa Construction Appendix to the Skills Plan, which will become a standalone report to be routinely updated. • ACTION 5.4 – an employer focused sub-group to be brought together to discuss and inform the next Skills Plan • ACTION 5.5 – to enable progression of the Skills Development Fund submission to WG by end of May, all partner ideas and contributions for areas of focus, to be emailed directly to Iwan Thomas by close of Friday 11 May. • ACTION 5.6 – discuss with WG the possibility of an extension to the deadline for submission of the Skills Development Fund proposals for North Wales
<p>Item No.</p>	<p>6.</p>
<p>Title:</p>	<p>Key Presentation – Development of Degree Apprenticeships in Wales – WG & HEFCW</p>
<p>Comments:</p>	<p>Tina Hawkins from WG was welcomed by the Chair</p> <p>Tina delivered a presentation on the proposed development of degree apprenticeships in Wales – led by Welsh Government and HEFCW. (Copy of slides attached).</p> <p>The presentation noted how employers wanted more engagement on the development of qualifications at this level, and that WG wanted to deliver a more integrated approach to learning by looking at new qualifications and new ways of doing things.</p> <p>Tuition fees would be publicly funded by WG into HEFCW, as the best people to take forward this development in WG eyes, are those involved directly with higher education.</p>

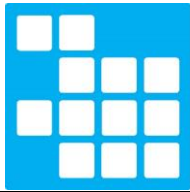


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	<p>The two initial areas of focus which have been agreed upon for Degree Apprenticeships are firstly Digital, and secondly, Advanced Manufacturing/Engineering.</p> <p>This new approach has already been highlighted within the Diamond Review and WG Apprenticeship Policy Plan amongst other documents – therefore giving it clear visibility and need for delivery; and also tie-in with supporting progression from existing level 3 apprenticeships.</p> <p>The programme will integrate practical and theoretical learning, with the voice of the employer being the primary driver in the development and delivery of this curriculum.</p> <p>Tina confirmed that WG had allocated a budget for the delivery of degree apprenticeships and that HEFCW had a strong response to calls for the proposals.</p> <p>Within the Digital framework, Tina confirmed that 3 pathways had already been identified and published, whilst for Engineering, more engagement was needed with employers before publishing.</p> <p>The benefits for employers is that it is fully funded here in Wales compared to England, and is aimed to enable employers to attract and retain high achievers.</p> <p>For providers, it provides further opportunities to build on existing relationships with the private sector, and also building new ones.</p> <p>Sasha Davies welcomed the presentation and detail provided, but would like to know more about the breakdown of targets and if this would be regional?</p> <p>Bryn Jones from Bangor University noted how the University in partnership with GLLM has already put in an expression of interest and was awaiting a response. This was of concern as the proposals from WG indicated that a September 2018 start date was required?</p> <p>This was supported by James Nelson who also noted that some students were already going into England to undertake Degree Apprenticeships, so timing and clarity would be key.</p> <p>Sue Price noted that Cambria was already delivering degree apprenticeships with Airbus via Swansea University, and that this was also open to those employers within the supply chain to support the sector as well, which has proved beneficial to date. Also, that we needed to be clear in the message to schools to promote this alongside all levels of apprenticeship, and commitment needed from participants.</p> <p>Gayle from the Open University noted that they too has put an expression of interest in, based on their existing successful delivery experience in both England and Scotland.</p> <p>Ruth Collinge noted how it would be important to sell this effectively and realistically, in that in addition to earning while working, that participants would also be having to study and revise during evenings and weekends, in addition to their job, for a set period of time.</p> <p>The Chair, Sasha Davies, had to leave the meeting at this point due to an existing commitment back on Anglesey, and Iwan Thomas stepped into facilitate the remainder of the meeting.</p> <p>Iwan thanked Tina for the presentation and the ensuing discussion, and reaffirmed the commitment of the RSP in North Wales to support the development of this, supporting WG and HEFCW as required.</p>
Decision:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACTION 6.1 – the RSP to continue to work with WG and HEFCW to support the development of Degree Apprenticeships, and to receive further information to share with partners, once finalised.

Item No.	7.
Title:	Welsh Government Update
Comments:	<p>Jayne Roberts was welcomed and asked to provide the key update from Welsh Government by Iwan Thomas.</p> <p>The first positive news was the confirmation from WG of funding for RSP's going forward, with a small increase for the first time in 3 years from £150k per annum, to £165k per annum, which covers staffing, meetings, delivery and publication of an annual Skills Plan, and associated outputs as required to meet regional economic skills demands.</p> <p>The internal review commissioned by WG on Regional Skills Partnerships by Professor John Graystone has been completed, and is being discussed by senior colleagues currently. The outcomes are all mainly positive, and reaffirms the recent Ministerial commitment to the development and impact of RSP's going forward, and the references to RSP's in all key documents such as the Economic Action Plan – "Prosperity for All" etc. Whilst the review had been undertaken in a short period of time, some of the partners had been interviewed as part of the Professors research, including him meeting both Sasha Davies as the Chair, and Iwan Thomas as the Programme Manager.</p>



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	<p>The RSP's are therefore seen as the key vehicle to support skills delivery nationally and regionally by WG, and is the primary body to bring together a broad range of local, regional, and national partners with a common suite of aims to inform policy, delivery, and spend.</p> <p>Jayne noted that Iwan had earlier mentioned the recent meeting of WG and RSP's in Llandrindod Wells, at which clear guidance for Regional Skills Plans was shared. A move to a new 3 year focused Plan with an annual update/progress report would now be expected going forward, and for partners in North Wales, this may that the three year Plan would start from next year due to timescales and resource issues? However, further discussion could happen on this.</p> <p>Jayne noted that Iwan had also mentioned earlier the opportunity around the Skills Development Fund, and that this presented a great opportunity for the RSP to directly influence and work in partnership with FEI's to address those skills gaps not possibly actively promoted within the region. Whilst timescales were possibly tight, the Skills Plan, alongside input from partners around the table, should enable a quick shortlist of opportunities to be developed, and to then work collectively to submit formal proposals from the North Wales RSP on what could and should be delivered in North Wales as part of this funding opportunity.</p> <p>Jayne highlighted that the 'Tertiary Education & Research Commission' is being proposed, and a consultation on this is currently on the WG website, with responses sought by July 17th. A regional response that supports individual partner responses would also be welcomed possibly.</p>
Decision:	ACTION 7.1 – Consultation on the new 'Tertiary Education & Research Commission' is currently open for comment, and a regional response be drafted to submit by July 17 th .

Item No.	8.
Title:	Any Other Business
Comments:	No items raised.
Decision:	

Next Meeting:	10:00am, Friday 29 June Venue TBC
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