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PUBLICATION, DOCUMENT

Cabinet paper: Innovation Strategy Delivery Plan

Cabinet paper CAB(23-24)05

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Contents

Decision required

- approve the new Innovation Strategy Delivery Plan for publication week commencing 16 October 2023.

Summary

As stated in our Strategy, Wales Innovates, published in February 2023, an accompanying Innovation Delivery Plan is now ready for Cabinet consideration and subsequent publication.

Wales Innovates set out a vision for a vibrant innovation culture for a stronger, fairer, greener Wales. To achieve this, it highlighted missions in 4 key areas of society:

- Education
- the Economy
- Health & Wellbeing
- Climate & Nature.

The Delivery Plan contains details for each mission on the relevant Goals, Actions, Milestones and Measurements which the Welsh Government – after extensive public consultation on the strategy – wishes to see achieved into the medium and longer-term.

Objective of the paper

This Delivery Plan sets out specific actions the Welsh Government will take, often in partnership with others, to deliver against the commitments set out in Wales Innovates. Additional engagement with stakeholders has taken place to test thinking developed from the extensive stakeholder engagement and consultation that was carried out ahead as part of the strategy development.

The Delivery Plan is intended to be a living, dynamic document with enough flex over time to respond to a changing political and economic and budgetary landscape, and to identify different and better opportunities in a rapidly changing funding environment. Future budgets will be included as budget discussions progress, to ensure our actions take full account of the challenging financial context, as well as the opportunities to access UK funds such as the Levelling Up Fund. The plan has been developed in full alignment with the Co-operation Agreement and has been agreed by the Designated Member.

As laid out in the Annex, changes to the plan across Welsh Government departments have been made to take account of the challenging financial context over the next few years, minimizing formal commitments and optimizing MEG flexibility. A guiding principle of the Plan is for Welsh Government to support Welsh innovation actors to become more successful in winning competitive UK and European funding sources. This aligns with the likely future scenario of trying to do more with less.

The plan lays out certain guiding principles:

- Each mission has underpinning commitments to geographic and demographic equality; a thriving innovation culture; and a joined up, collaborative way of working.
- The Innovation Team will be responsible for bringing together innovation leads to work collaboratively across Welsh departments and policy areas.
- The Commission for Tertiary Education and Research, and its Research and Innovation sub-committee will have a key contribution to make in delivery, given its leading role in promoting innovation in Wales.
- Departments will make key investments from within their own budgets, where possible. Departments will also work more collaboratively with the UK government to bring investment into the Welsh RD&I ecosystem, to drive progress against our shared objectives.
- Departments will track the course of the missions, developed through ongoing engagement with Plaid Cymru under the Co-operation Agreement, overseen by the Innovation Advisory Council for Wales (IACW).
- Departments will review progress at the end of year one, reflecting on what's changed and how our ecosystem is transitioning away from direct EU funding towards a more leveraged, competitive RD&I model.
- Innovation Team will run structured evaluations at years 3 and 5 to consider where measurable outcomes, linked to our missions and goals, have been delivered.

Impact

The plan has been developed by relevant policy leads across Welsh Government, and will be implemented accordingly to guide our actions to deliver

impact on the priorities of the Programme for Government:

- A stronger and more resilient economy.
- Effective and sustainable healthcare.
- Higher educational standards, particularly in tertiary education and research.
- Respond to the climate and nature emergency in everything we do.

The plan empowers all stakeholders to work collaboratively towards shared goals for innovation, and to lever investment for innovation from external sources, primarily the UK government, to deliver our priorities. The UK government has made a commitment within the United Kingdom Levelling Up White Paper to increase domestic R&D spend outside of the greater South East. This plan aims to ensure Wales receives its share of the increased spend. To do this, the Plan sets out a strategic direction, designed to help Welsh innovation stakeholders develop more collaborative, bigger and more ambitious bids for competitive UK and European sources for RD&I funding. The first action to address this was the MoU with Innovate UK signed in April 2023 and the upcoming collaboration agreement, which sets out how we will work together on this agenda, this will be announced at Wales Tech Week on the 16th October. Opportunities to strengthen our relationships with other UK Departments investing in RD&I are being explored.

Each mission in the strategy has underpinning commitments to geographic and demographic equality; a thriving inclusive innovation culture; and a joined-up, collaborative way of working.

Communications and publication

Should Cabinet agree to the publication of the delivery plan, this will be planned for week commencing 16 October. It is proposed the Minister for the Economy will provide a written statement. Officials advise this paper can be published 6 weeks after the Cabinet meeting.

Vaughan Gething
Minister for the Economy
September 2023