

Ministerial Taskforce for the Valleys

4 October 2018, 10:00-12:00

The Centre, Senghenydd, Caerphilly

In attendance

Taskforce Members

Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services, Alun Davies AM
Leader of the House and Chief Whip, Julie James AM
Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning, Eluned Morgan AM
Minister for Housing and Regeneration, Rebecca Evans AM
Judith Evans, Principal, Coleg y Cymoedd
Brian Morgan, Professor of Entrepreneurship at Cardiff Met University
Andrew Diplock, Entrepreneur, Angel Investor and Advisor
Ann Beynon, Non Executive Director and member of CBI Wales Council.
Cllr Andrew Morgan, Leader of Rhondda Cynon Taf
Fiona Jones, Department for Work and Pensions

Programme Board Members

Maureen Howell, Equality and Prosperity – Deputy Director
John Howells, Director, Housing and Regeneration (SRO)
David Rosser, Director, Sport, ESNR

Valleys Taskforce Team

Sarah King, Valleys Taskforce Project Lead (Speaker)
Phil Lewis, Head of Valleys Taskforce Branch (Speaker)
Laurie Hayward, Senior Programme Manager, Valleys Taskforce
Nicola Leadbeatter, Programme Manager, Valleys Taskforce

Apologies

Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport, Ken Skates AM
Dr Chris Jones, Interim Chair, HEIW
Martin Mansfield, General Secretary, Wales TUC
Tracey Burke, Director General, Education and Public Services

Item 1: Welcome and Introductions.

1. The Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services, Alun Davies (AD) welcomed attendees to the eleventh meeting of the Ministerial Taskforce for the Valleys.
2. He outlined the importance of switching the focus to delivery as we move forward and asked members to look closely at what they see being delivered in the taskforce area. An updated delivery plan was due to be published at the end of November.

Item 2: Valleys Regional Park (VRP)

1. An overview of the progress so far on the Valleys Regional Park was presented.
2. There was a query about why the name had changed from “Valleys Landscape Park” and it was confirmed that this was because the project was about much more than just the landscape, although the landscape and utilising that was obviously a major part of it.

3. Inspiration had been taken from an earlier visit to Belgium where they have a similar heritage and had created a National Park.
4. It was confirmed Welsh Water had been involved in conversations and would continue to be.
5. A question was raised about social prescribing and if it was being considered as part of the work on the VRP. GP's were now recommending work experience outdoors and in the community for some patients presenting with Mental Health issues. It was confirmed that health and wellbeing formed a large part of the VRP work and that the Health Department in Welsh Government had just launched two programmes related to social prescribing and a Healthy and Active fund.
6. The group was informed that Natural Resources Wales has a new, very enthusiastic Chief Executive who is bringing some great ideas.
7. An important point was made about whatever work is done in the Valleys must be sustainable. The taskforce must consider previous lessons learned.
8. Swansea was provided as an example where wildflowers had been used for landscaping which required a much smaller amount of maintenance, albeit some.
9. Local authority involvement would be key.
10. It was confirmed that while the VRP could not have National Park status, WG would legislate to ensure the VRP would have a statutory underpinning and be sustainable.
11. A suggestion to speak with those that assisted in creating the Snowdonia National Park was met with assurances that the Brecon Beacons have been involved in discussions and are content with proposals.
12. The taskforce discussed potential opportunities to use the regional park to promote renewable energy schemes.

Item 3: Strategic Hubs – an update

13. A presentation was given on the progress made on the Strategic Hubs workstream.
14. A seminar on the duelling of the A465 had recently taken place which highlighted the need to ensure we take the opportunities for economic activity to ensure we gain from this investment.
15. It was confirmed that the Enterprise Hubs were interlinked with the Strategic Hubs and this would be noticeable when more is announced about the enterprise hubs.
16. An issue was raised about the lack of premises available for business start-ups and that this was now beginning to be addressed. It was felt that integrated transport systems would be key to the success.
17. Concerns were raised that funding for skills etc could head back towards Cardiff with City Deal etc but it was important to attract programmes that increase skills and entrepreneurship to the Valleys area.
18. It was confirmed there would be more community engagement in the next year and that in the immediate future the intention was that this should be associated with the work of promoting the VRP.

Items 3 & 4: Progress on actions from the Delivery Plan and how the next version of the delivery plan should look.

19. A brief overview was provided of the documents members had received prior to the meeting. On the 7,000 people in to work commitment, just over 1,600 people had entered work via WG led employment programmes since July 2016.
20. It was discussed that Welsh Government programmes in relation to apprenticeships were usually given at the request of individuals looking for apprenticeships. It was felt that there needs to be more direct engagement with businesses and offering bursaries to encourage them to take on apprentices as smaller businesses struggle with capacity to take on apprentices with college requirements etc.
21. Members were asked to agree that a stripped down delivery plan with more focus on Valleys only pieces of work, or pieces of work that were being done differently in the Valleys should be published. The plan currently holds a lot of Wales-wide actions

which would be happening in the Valleys anyway. This was agreed.

22. A focus on the work of Better Jobs Closer to Home should be recognised. This programme is having great success in re-diverting funds back in to Wales with good numbers on employment. The difference in culture needs to be captured.
23. Members requested that detailed highlight reports are continually reported so members can question the RAG status given to the actions.
24. It was confirmed that we were aiming for the end of November to publish the next version of the delivery plan but that this would be sent to members for comments prior to that. In the meantime, if any taskforce members have comments or suggestions for the new delivery plan they need to feedback to the taskforce team by next Friday 12th October.

Item 5: AOB

25. Need to ensure key organisations see this and ensure they have an opportunity to discuss with us. Securing their buy-in is important.
26. The date of the next meeting would be sent shortly, along with dates for the whole of next year to provide plenty of notice for members.