

Ministerial Taskforce for the Valleys

16 October 2019, 10:00 – 12:00

Cwmaman Community Centre, Ammanford

In attendance

Taskforce Members

Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport, Lee Waters AM (Chair)
Cllr Andrew Morgan, Leader of Rhondda Cynon Taf
Dawn Bowden AM, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney
James Davies, Industry Wales
Joshua Miles, Federation of Small Businesses
Wendy Walters, Chief Executive, Carmarthenshire Council
Ruth Treharne, Cwm Taf Health Board
Nicola Somerville – Cardiff City Region (On behalf of Kellie Beirne)

Programme Board Members

Maureen Howell, Equality and Prosperity – Deputy Director
David Rosser, Director, Sport, ESNR

Valleys Taskforce Team

Sarah King, Valleys Taskforce Project Lead
Phil Lewis, Head of Valleys Taskforce Branch
Kelly Clement – Valleys Taskforce Programme Manager

Apologies

Kellie Beirne – Programme Director, CCR City Deal

Speakers

Phil Lewis, Valleys Regional Park
Victoria Winckler, Bevan Foundation
Helen Cunningham, Bevan Foundation
Liam Hopkins, The Urbanists
Rhian Kyte, Caerphilly County Borough Council
Marcus Lloyd, Caerphilly County Borough Council
Clair Stonelake, Welsh Government

Item 1: Welcome and Introductions.

1. The Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport, Lee Waters AM (LW) opened the meeting and welcomed new members.
2. Maureen Howell (MH) provided a brief update on the subgroups for each priority area. Subgroups are currently in the formation stage and we are working with the chair of each group to decide membership. The chair of each subgroup is:
 - Grounded Firms and Foundational Economy – Joshua Miles
 - Entrepreneurship and business support – To be confirmed
 - Transport – Dawn Bowden AM
 - Housing – Derek James (on behalf of Cllr Andrew Morgan)
 - VTF Innovation Fund – Lee Waters
 - Valleys Regional Park – Cllr Anthony Hunt (Ruth Treharne will be the link to the taskforce)
 - Strategic Hubs – including A465 and digital – James Davies

3. LW provided an update on the recently published progress report. The taskforce is now in a different place to what it was 10 months ago and the role of the taskforce is changing.
4. LW raised the possible impact of Brexit on the Valleys and asked the taskforce to consider how we can use the taskforce to face the difficult times ahead.
5. The taskforce team are holding a range of engagement events across the Valleys in conjunction with Transport for Wales (TfW). This was a direct response to the early engagement with communities. Those held to date had gone well and the next event is scheduled for Aberdare on 17 October.
6. The first business surgery took place in Bargoed on 17 June and the next one is scheduled in Rhymney on 25 November.
7. There is a meeting next week to discuss the work around the Alumni. The idea behind this is to give comprehensive schools the opportunity to set up their own alumni network and provide practical work experience and mentoring.
8. The Foundational Economy challenge fund has been tripled. The Valleys taskforce have provided £2.45m of funding specifically for those projects based in the Valleys taskforce area. Applications have been assessed and announcements for valleys projects will be made next week.

Item 2: Valleys Regional Park

1. Phil Lewis (PL) went through the Valleys Regional Park update paper.
2. Bids from all 11 Gateway sites were assessed and funding awards announced on 11 September.
3. A Valleys Regional Park website covering the first phase Discovery Sites and outlining Valleys Regional Park developments will be created in the New Year.
4. LW said that as part of his meetings with local authorities looking at best practice, an idea raised was the Bridgend model of community connectors. PL reflected that there would be 5 posts for community connectors. They will work throughout the Gateway sites and look at what's already there, is it useful and could this be turned into best practice.
5. Ruth Treharne (RT) said a good example was park runs. A concern was raised around the reluctance of GPs to sign activities like these off as they are not risk assessed. What can we do to overcome? **ACTION - LW asked PL to look into a mapping exercise to look at the gaps.**
6. Dawn Bowden (DB) raised that the well-being aspect needs to be more linked with health provision. **ACTION - PL agreed to pick up with RT.**
7. A Valleys Regional Park forum is currently being set up and will be made up of officer representatives from all 13 Local Authorities, key partner organisations, health boards, National Resources Wales, third sector and private sector.
8. PL highlighted the work already achieved and the plans to hold events at each of the Gateways sites early in the New Year.
9. PL provided a short update on land designation. A meeting has taken place with the Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government and there will be a working group to consider the options available.

Item 3: Strategic Hubs – Masterplan/Integrated Transport Plans

10. Clair Stonelake (CS) provided a brief update on the process taken for developing the masterplans. There are 3 components:
 - The plan itself
 - Supporting evidence to show why the plan looks like it does
 - Delivery and Implementation plan to demonstrate how to take the plan forward and deliver.

11. The masterplans are still in draft and need to be signed off by the client team.
12. Liam Hopkins (LH) presented the strategic masterplan presentation for Caerphilly.
13. Rhian Kyte (RK) added this work builds on the engagement undertaken with the public last year thus providing the evidence and demand for the objectives outlined in the Plan. The public have been fully involved and engaged with all work to date.
14. RK praised the excellent process and collaborative working with Caerphilly, Welsh Government and the Urbanists.
15. The Taskforce members asked about how realistic the plans were in terms of timescales for delivery and sources of funding. The Urbanists confirmed all of the strategic projects in the Plan had been subject to external commercial advice and they were in the process of producing a detailed Delivery Plan for each of the three areas – Merthyr, Pontypridd and Caerphilly. The Delivery Plans will outline the key strategic projects, their associated timescales and costs and also puts these into phases in terms of short term, medium and long term delivery.

Item 4: Prosperous Valleys, Resilient Communities

16. Victoria Winckler (VW) opened up the presentation on Prosperous Valleys, Resilient Communities.
17. The presentation highlighted that to ensure success, key elements for the Valleys future are:
 - Long term plan – 10 years plus
 - Ambitious
 - Deliverable
 - Build on assets
 - Recognise complexity
 - Focused on building the economy and creating jobs
 - Root causes
18. Helen Cunningham (HC) provided an update on the four ways the Valleys taskforce could take some of this work forward:
 - Action to build the whole economy
 - Develop anchor towns
 - Make the most of assets – People and infrastructure
 - Maximise A465 and Metro
19. There are challenges in the future and steps taken need to be long term and ambitious.
20. How do we balance the importance of the foundational economy against the downfall of low paid jobs? Joshua Miles (JM) said that this is a fair challenge. We only have 18 months left of the programme so need to look at the tangible aspects to take forward. We need to challenge stereotypes and shout louder about our successes. The legacy of the taskforce needs to be a long term vision.
21. LW raised the disruptive times ahead and the possible impacts of Brexit, automation of vehicles etc. We need to be active and nimble so how can we plan with these uncertainties? VW said the Valleys need to cope with changes and that we need resilience and the skills to take advantage of opportunities as they come along.
22. Wendy Walters (WW) raised that we need to explore what the role of the public sector is. Assets are shrinking so what can be devolved to the community.
23. LW thanked VW and HC for their presentation and raised that, we are keen to engage with the Bevan Foundation and welcome any challenges.

Item 5: AOB

24. Future meetings will focus on a number of the priorities and the discussions coming out of the subgroups.
25. Date of next meeting – 30 January, 10:00-12:00. More details to follow.