

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
REGIONAL INVESTMENT FOR WALES STEERING GROUP**

Date: Thursday 30 July 2020

Time: 2 – 3.15 p.m. (TEAMS)

Annex A: Attendees

1. Welcome

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone thanking them for their attendance.

The Chair noted that the purpose of this meeting was to update members on the Cabinet discussion which took place on 13 July so officials and stakeholders could work on next steps during the remaining part of the year.

He also welcomed colleagues from the research company SRI who were attending the meeting to provide an overview of their initial independent analysis of the consultation feedback.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Due to this meeting being held so soon after the last meeting on 02 July, the minutes will be circulated shortly.

3. General Update

The Chair asked Rachel Garside-Jones (RGJ) to provide an overview of latest developments, including the OECD project and forward plans, and any updates on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).

RGJ updated members that the OECD attended virtually the Cabinet meeting on 13 July to present and discuss the OECD's draft final report and recommendations. Overall, Ministers' feedback on the report was very positive. The report has some recommendations which will require the input and engagement of members. It was also noted that some recommendations will be for consideration over the longer term and beyond this Senedd term, while other recommendations will need to be acted on quickly. A special meeting of this Steering Group is planned for 3 September so that the OECD can present its findings and recommendations to the Group ahead of the formal launch of the report on 17 September. The full OECD draft report will be circulated a week before that meeting.

At the Cabinet meeting in July, Ministers agreed to the establishment, on a task and finish basis, of a Ministerial Working Group (MWG), to consider a number of key issues ahead of another Cabinet meeting in October to agree next steps. The RIWSG Chair will be a member of this Group so that the views of the Steering Group

can be shared directly. Updates on MWG developments and progress will be given to future meetings of this Group.

Despite bi-monthly meetings with the UK Government department leading on the UKSPF, there is still no detail, plans or timeline on the UK Shard Prosperity Fund. Details are not expected until the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) in late Autumn.

Comments and questions from the Group included:

- What is the process for influencing CSR, particularly in the context of research and innovation budgets in the review not being increased?
- From various discussions and information, it appears that the English Devolution White Paper will be the context for channelling the future UKSPF. The WLGA have written to the Secretary of State and Minister about their concerns on this issue and to reinforce the need for devolution in Wales to be respected.
- One of the themes in the OECD report is achieving a more effective division of labour between national and regional levels within Wales. If the Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) are not in place from April 2021, what are the transitional arrangements?
- A number of existing structures (e.g. City and Growth Deals, North Wales Economic Ambition Board) exist to support regional working and delivery until the CJCs are established.
- How advanced are the other devolved administrations (DAs) in their regional investment plans?
- Is there local government representation on the new Ministerial Working Group?

RGJ responded that she shared concerns on R&D and will raise with colleagues in the respective WG departments. A response to the CSR is being developed by devolved administrations following the UK R&D roadmap. There will be possibilities of international and cross-border working to build on our strengths in R&D, and colleagues were mindful of needing a Team Wales approach to progress this.

One of the tasks of the Ministerial Working Group will be to consider transitional arrangements, including partnerships for the future of regional investment, so that we are ready to hit the ground running when UK Government replacement funding is allocated to Wales. This Group and the sub groups will be important in helping to develop these arrangements.

WG colleagues have bi-monthly catch ups with Scottish and Northern Ireland counterparts. In terms of the DAs' regional work preparations, Scotland ran a high level consultation between November 2019 and January 2020 and has recently

published its consultation findings. Northern Ireland is further behind with its arrangements, with no consultation or substantial stakeholder engagement to date, mainly because the Assembly was in a period of suspension until January this year. Wales is more advanced in this work in terms of the setting up of stakeholder groups early in 2019 and in developing the detailed plans for future investment priorities and delivery arrangements which were widely consulted on from February to June 2020.

The Local Government and Housing Minister is involved in the new Ministerial Working Group. In addition, Huw Irranca-Davies MS, Chair of the RIWSG, is a member of the Group in order to ensure that stakeholder views are represented. There is a cross-Welsh Government officials group supporting the Ministerial Working Group including the Chief Regional Officer Teams, Welsh Treasury and Local Government officials.

4. Consultation Feedback

The Chair welcomed Suzanne Pritchard and Angus Campbell from research company SRI, who have been leading on the independent analysis of the consultation responses, to deliver a presentation on their early findings.

Comments from the Group included:

- The messages from the presentation are very helpful and can help us move forward in a number of areas. Are there plans to look at areas of overlap between the analysis of the OECD report and the forthcoming independent consultation report?

RGJ responded that we are working with SRI to consider any overlaps. The new Ministerial Working Group and Cabinet will be informed by both reports to help agree next steps, as well as the work of the Steering Group going forward. We can also raise directly with the OECD at the next meeting of this Group.

The Chair noted the breadth of responses from the consultation and that the Group will look forward to seeing the final independent analysis for further consideration, including in the context of future investments addressing COVID recovery as well as longer-term growth. He thanked SRI colleagues for their presentations and noted that they would be circulated to members after the meeting for information.

5. Ministerial Working Group

The Chair noted that RGJ had already touched upon the formation of the new Ministerial Working Group, but that this item provided the opportunity for members to make comments on the key issues covered in the supporting paper.

RGJ noted that membership of the new Ministerial Working Group currently includes the Counsel General and Minister for European Transition, Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales, Minister for Finance and Trefnydd, Minister for Housing and Local Government, and Huw Irranca-Davies MS, who all have a direct interest in the future of regional investment.

The MWG will meet during August and September to consider key issues ahead of another Cabinet meeting in mid-October. The key issues to be discussed include regionalism, regional responsibilities, simplification of structures, transition arrangements and COVID implications.

Comments from the group included:

- Issues on regionalism need input from the regions, including the four chairs of the city and growth deal, to help build on opportunities, shape arrangements in the papers and to develop work on the rural aspect.
- With an election in May 2021, will there be cross-party agreement on what the transition arrangements will look like, as businesses would benefit from this certainty?
- The four areas described are the key make-or-break areas, which have been discussed thoroughly by the RIWSG. They are hard-to-make decisions and Ministers have to be prepared to look at them in terms of what will be best for Wales in 10-15 years and stick with them.
- It was suggested that there should also be input to the Ministerial Working Group on the Wales-Whitehall relationship. It is very important to the regional development agenda in Wales, and goes beyond the UKSPF. Other non-devolved elements of common frameworks will have enormous effect on our ability to promote regional investment and non-devolved policy impact on devolved policy areas e.g. procurement, trade and its impact on agriculture.
- Any paper focusing on recovery should also focus on green recovery.

RGJ responded to the comments by saying that there is a meeting in August to pull together leads to discuss the rural agenda, and we will follow up with the regions and continue to keep the Steering Group fully updated and work closely with the Chief Regional Officer teams. In terms of transitional arrangements, by April we will be in the pre-election period, and the transition paper needs to be as clear as possible on plans so that the transition is as smooth as possible and provides business with that certainty. She also noted the important points made on the Wales-Whitehall relationship and that the CGMET has been proactive in this area, which can be discussed as part of the MWG. To facilitate this, we would welcome suggestions on what specific questions could be asked of Ministers so that it can be covered in the papers being presented.

The Chair asked Members to feed in their ideas and other comments by email to the regional investment mailbox prior to the MWG meetings. Dates of the MWG will be issued to Members accordingly.

6. Any other business and concluding remarks

The next meeting will be on 3 September with OECD colleagues attending to present their final report and recommendations ahead of the report's launch on 17 September. A diary marker for an online meeting will be issued to Members shortly.

There was no AOB.

The Chair thanked members for their time and closed the meeting.

LIST OF ATTENDEES

Chair

Huw Irranca-Davies MS

SRI contractors

Suzanne Pritchard

Angus Campbell

Members

Organisation	Name and role
North Wales partnership	Cllr Dyfrig Siencyn, North Wales Economic Ambition Board
Growing Mid Wales partnership	Cllr Ellen Ap Gwynn, Leader, Ceredigion Council
Natural Resources Wales	Dominic Driver, Head of Land Stewardship
South West Wales partnership	Cllr Emlyn Dole, Leader, Carmarthenshire Council Cllr David Simpson, Leader, Pembrokeshire Council Cllr Rob Stewart, Leader, Swansea Council
Grahame Guilford (independent)	Grahame Guilford, Owner, Grahame Guilford and Company Ltd
Wales Council for Voluntary Action	Matthew Brown, Assistant Director of Investments
Wales Co-operative Centre	Glenn Bowen, Programme Director
FSB Wales	Ben Cottam, Head of External Affairs
South East Wales partnership	Kellie Beirne, Director, Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Nicole Somerville, Head of Business Development and Inclusive Growth, Cardiff Capital Region City Deal
Wales Rural Network	Eirlys Lloyd, Community Partnerships/Food Centre Wales Manager, Ceredigion County Council
Professor Kevin Morgan (independent)	Professor Kevin Morgan, Governance and Development, Cardiff University
WLGA	Tim Peppin, Director of Regeneration and Sustainable Development Lowri Gwilym, Team Manager – Europe and Regeneration, Regeneration and Environment
Higher Education Funding Council for Wales	Alyson Thomas, Director of Policy and Funding

Universities Wales	Amanda Wilkinson, Director
CBI Wales	Nick Speed, British Telecom
Mid Wales partnership	Carwyn Jones-Evans, Ceredigion Council
North Wales Economic Ambition Board	Alwen Williams, Programme Director
Colegau Cymru	Rachel Bowen, Director of Policy and Public Affairs
Carmarthenshire County Council	Helen Morgan,
FSB	Ashley Rogers

Welsh Government attendees

Name	Role and Department
Peter Ryland	Director – WEFO
Rachel Garside-Jones	Deputy Director, Regional Investment – WEFO
Rhodri Griffiths	Chief Regional Officer Mid and South West Wales – Economy, Skills and Natural Resources
David Rosser	Chief Regional Officer, South East Wales – Economy, Skills and Natural Resources
Andrew Clark	Deputy Director Employability and Skills – Economy, Skills and Natural Resources
Jonathan Fortune	Senior Strategy Manager – Economy, Skills and Natural Resources
Ann Watkin	Head of Strategy, Operations Alignment and Planning – Economy, Skills and Natural Resources
Alison Sandford	Head of Partnership Working – WEFO
Tracy Welland	Head of Strategic Implementation – WEFO
Sheilah Seymour	Head of Research and Analysis – WEFO
Geraint Green	Head of Programme Management (ESF and ETC) – WEFO
Simon Tew	Head of Risk Management and Readiness – Economy, Skills and Natural Resources
Helen Minnice-Smith	Agriculture & Climate Change Policy Adviser – Economy, Skills and Natural Resources
David Roberts	Senior Research Officer – WEFO
Ashley Davis	Policy Officer – WEFO

Michelle Holland	Regional Investment Support Officer – WEFO
Ceri Edwards	Senior Policy Manager – WEFO
Tom Brown	Senior Policy Manager – WEFO
John Howells	Director, Climate Change and Energy Planning – Economy, Skills and Natural Resources
John Hughes	Head of Regional Investment – Economy, Skills and Natural Resources

Apologies received

Organisation	Name and Role
Welsh Government	Emma Watkins, Deputy Director, Economic Policy
	Calvin Jones
Welsh Government	Sioned Evans, Director, Business and Regions
Cardiff University	Prof Calvin Jones, Deputy Dean, Public Value & External Relations