

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

Date: Wednesday 4 November 2020

Time: 11:00 – 13:00

Annex A: Attendees

1. Welcome (11:00 – 11:05)

- The Chair welcomed Members and thanked them for their attendance.
- The Chair noted the purpose of the meeting was so Members can hear directly from the Counsel General and Minister for European Transition on the progress of this work and to offer final comments on the Framework for Regional Investment prior to its publication.
- The Chair also welcomed Paul Slevin, President of the South and Mid Wales Chambers of Commerce to his first meeting.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (11:05)

- The Chair noted the draft minutes from the meeting on 3 September and asked if Members had any comments. There were no comments and the minutes were accepted and will be published on the Welsh Government website.

3. General Update (11:05 – 11:30)

- The Chair asked Peter Ryland (PR) to provide an overview of developments that have taken place since the last meeting on 3 September.
- PR thanked members for their input on the development of the Framework for Regional Investment in Wales and explained that we still did not know any details on the UK Government's proposals for the Shared Prosperity Fund despite the attempts of Welsh Government Ministers and officials to engage with them on this matter.
- PR said Wales' Framework gives Welsh Government Ministers a solid platform to negotiate with the UK Government with aim to publish it ahead of the UK Government's Spending Review, where an announcement on the SPF was likely. Any necessary interim measures following the Spending Review would be discussed with the RIWSG.
- Rachel Garside-Jones (RGJ) provided feedback on the Ministerial Working Group (MWG) on regional investment held on 24 September and the Cabinet discussion of the draft Framework on 16 October. The meetings had been

positive on the development of the Framework's focus on regionalism and the balance between national, regional and local interventions. Cabinet agreed that the MWG would continue its role into 2021 and also endorsed the work of the RIWSG.

- The following points were raised by Members:
 - The need for a careful transition from where we are now to a functional system, and that the structures of the RIWSG (and sub groups) were an ideal way of doing this – if Ministers were on board with this.
 - The need for the Framework to have a more multi-dimensional function to consider the broader funding environment beyond the SPF.
 - Welcomed the Framework in general and its principles, but local government cited some concern about the potential for the proposed Corporate Joint Committees to conflict with existing regional structures and felt more discussion was needed in North Wales on this issue.
 - Welcomed the Framework's focus on Research, Development and Innovation.
 - The medium term development of the Framework and the role of various stakeholders in shaping its evolution.

4. Update from Counsel General and Minister for European Transition, Jeremy Miles MS (11:30 – 12:00)

- The Minister (CGMET) thanked all the Members for their input, expertise and support in developing the Framework, noting its publication would be a significant milestone in the two years of regional investment work undertaken by the Group.
- The following points were made in response to several comments and questions made by Members:
 - The CGMET emphasised that the CJC-led model would be sensitive to the issues raised and there would be an ongoing process to refine it.
 - The CGMET was happy to consider the ongoing merit of the RIWSG, but stated it would be for the next Welsh Government to decide on permanent governance structures beyond spring 2021.
 - The CGMET stated that Cabinet agreed to WEFO managing the new regional investment policy in the transition period.
 - Responding to a Member's question about contingency plans should the UK Government not respect devolution, the CGMET noted that while we would accept top-line UK scope, arrangements need to be co-designed and not intrude on devolution. The UK Government doesn't have the

influence and capacity on the ground to deliver something that's right for Wales.

- The CGMET noted that consideration would be given to a broader application for the Framework beyond the Shared Prosperity Fund.
 - The CGMET said that the Ministerial Working Group on regional investment would continue in the short term and would want to draw on the expertise in this Group. The Chair added that there was an appetite for the Group to have an ongoing role and cited its reach in regard to various sectors.
 - CGMET noted the support for devolution and said he would discuss with the Minister for Housing and Local Government about regional structures and CJsCs.
 - A member commented that the approach taken to this work had been positive and inclusive, and queried whether there would be resource reallocation to support the greater role at regional level. CGMET stated that there would be a sensitive transition to a new model and consideration of what support is available.
- The Chair thanked CGMET for his time and ongoing engagement with the Group.

5. Discussion on the draft Framework for Regional Investment (12:00 – 12:55)

- RGJ introduced the draft Framework and welcomed any further comments and suggestions on the text to ensure it is positioned to maximise regional investment opportunities.
- The following points were raised by Members:
 - Some text would be offered to reflect views previously expressed about broadening scope of the Framework beyond the Shared Prosperity Fund.
 - Further political engagement was needed to find a consensus on role of the proposed CJsCs, including approaches for cross-border working with neighbouring authorities.
 - Important for businesses to receive clarity on distinctions between national, regional and local structures and the role of CJsCs. A greater emphasis in the Framework on decarbonisation of businesses was also suggested.
 - Support noted for points made earlier on integrating synergistic funding opportunities to find the right balance between replacement EU funding and the wider funding environment.
 - The importance of flexibility moving forward so that the Framework can respond to emerging issues.

- The need to strengthen regional capacity in order to make regional autonomy meaningful. Strengthening regional mechanisms should make cross-border working easier and cross-border projects could be a key part of synergistic funding.
- The need for third sector engagement with CJsCs.
- Support for decentralisation but decentralisation should not mean transferring local authority powers to regional bodies.
- RGJ thanked the Group for their input and said that suggested amendments to the Framework would be considered following meeting. RJG said that officials would continue to engage with Group around the publication of the Framework in mid-November.

6. Any other business and concluding remarks (12:55 – 13:00)

- The Chair stated that the next meeting would take place in December following the UK Government Spending Review where an announcement on the Shared Prosperity Fund was expected.
- The Chair asked for any further comments before thanking members for their input and closing the meeting.

ANNEX A

LIST OF ATTENDEES

Chair

Huw Irranca-Davies MS

Members

Organisation	Name
CBI Wales	Nick Speed, Public Affairs Director, BT
Universities Wales	Amanda Wilkinson, Director
South East Wales Partnership	Kellie Beirne, Director, Cardiff Capital Region City Deal
WLGA	Chris Llewellyn, Chief Executive
Cardiff University	Claire Hobbs
South West Wales Partnership	Cllr David Simpson, Leader, Pembrokeshire Council
South West Wales Partnership	Cllr David Jenkins, Executive Board Member for Resources, Carmarthenshire Council
Growing Mid Wales Partnership	Cllr Rosemarie Harris, Leader, Powys Council
WLGA	Dan Hurford, Head of Policy
	Ceri Davies
Wales Co-operative Centre	Derek Walker, Chief Executive
Wales Rural Network	Eirlys Lloyd, Community Partnerships/Food Centre Wales Manager, Ceredigion Council
Grahame Guilford (Independent)	Grahame Guilford, Owner, Grahame Guilford and Company Ltd
FSB Wales	Ashley Rogers, Director, Gill and Shaw
Professor Kevin Morgan (Independent)	Professor Kevin Morgan, Governance and Development, Cardiff University
WLGA	Lowri Gwilym, Manager – Europe and Regeneration, Regeneration and Environment
South and Mid Wales Chambers of Commerce	Paul Slevin, President
South West Wales Partnership	Cllr Rob Stewart, Leader, Swansea Council
North Wales Partnership	Cllr Dyfrig Siencyn, North Wales Economic Ambition Board
WLGA	Tim Peppin, Director of Regeneration and Sustainable Development

Welsh Government attendees

Name	Role and department
Peter Ryland	Chief Executive, 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
Gwenllian Roberts	Chief Regional Officer, North Wales – Economy, Skills and Natural Resources
Gail Merriman	RDP Community and Co-operation Schemes Manager – Economy, Skills and Natural Resources
Alison Sandford	Head of Partnership Working, WEFO
Mike Richards	Communications Manager, WEFO
Sheilah Seymour	Head of Research and Analysis, WEFO
Tracy Welland	Head of Strategic Implementation, WEFO
Geraint Green	Head of Programme Management (ESF and ETC), WEFO
Ceri Edwards	Senior Policy Manager, WEFO
Tom Brown	Senior Policy Manager, WEFO
Ashley Davis	Policy Officer, WEFO
Michelle Holland	Regional Investment Support Officer, WEFO