

MEETING OF THE REGIONAL INVESTMENT IN WALES STEERING GROUP MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 16 December 2020

Time: 11:00 – 12:00

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 to update Members on the implications of the UK Government Spending Review (25 November) and the developments that have taken place since, including a meeting of the Ministerial Working Group on 3 December.

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

- The Chair noted the draft minutes from the meeting on 4 November 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. UK Spending Review and Ministerial Working Group update (11:05 – 11:30)

- The Chair stated that the UK Government had announced £220m for a UK-wide pilot programme for the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) during the 2021-22 financial year. The Chair added that the UK Government intends to 'ramp up' the SPF to an annual UK figure of £1.5bn from 2022-23. Currently there is no information on the role of Devolved Governments or how the pilot programme or the full SPF funding can be utilised.
- Peter Ryland (PR) said that the prospectus for the pilot year was expected in January. Details on the longer-term SPF were expected in the summer and would not necessarily follow the same format given the limited funding and timescale to run the pilot.
- PR added that Welsh Ministers were very supportive of the Framework for Regional Investment in Wales that the Welsh Government had produced with stakeholders and emphasised that it remains the Welsh Government's focus for supporting regional economic development in the future. However, given the limited funds available for the pilot SPF in 2021-22 and that we were still waiting for the outcome of the Internal Market Bill and clarity from the UK Government on plans around SPF delivery, our work to develop things further would be paused for the time being.

- Rachel Garside-Jones (RGJ) stated that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) leading on the SPF had indicated that the UK Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will have a key role in the SPF beyond the pilot year. RGJ emphasised the importance of ensuring Welsh Government involvement in the longer-term SPF through ongoing stakeholder engagement.
- The Chair added that Welsh Ministers were grateful for the collaborative work that had taken place on developing the Framework for Wales and believed that it had the right principles, structures and mechanics for long-term regional economic development in Wales.

4. Open discussion (11:30 – 11:55)

- The following points were raised by Members:
 - Concern about the level of funds that Wales is likely to receive via the pilot year and longer-term SPF, and the effect this would have on the sustainability of schemes currently supported by EU funds.
 - Whether there are funds outside of the SPF that could be deployed through the Framework for Regional Investment in Wales.
 - Discussion on the collective approach to engaging with the UK Government over the pilot year funds and development of the longer-term SPF. Consensus on working together and exploring all avenues to try and input into UK Government plans, while also ensuring to keep the importance of devolution in Wales at the forefront of discussions.
 - History of UK funds disadvantaging rural and lower-population areas and accountability issues, with the UK Government's Towns Fund in England cited as an example. Suggestion of a review of approach based on worst-case financial scenarios.
 - UK Government messages around direct funding of local authorities via the SPF despite the regional approach to economic development and recovery being taken forward by local government in Wales.
 - Frustration at the UK Government's disrespect of work undertaken in Wales on future regional investment and devolution, and the piecemeal approach coming from the UK Government.
 - Continuity of funding for projects/interventions currently supported by EU funds is key to help tackle the rise in unemployment caused by the Covid pandemic and Brexit.

- The following points were made in response to comments and questions from Members:
 - A reiteration of Ministers' support of the Framework developed with stakeholders across Wales as the long-term approach to regional economic development in Wales.
 - The role of the Framework in negotiations with the UK Government as a public, shared view of what we want in Wales to replace EU funding programmes. The economic landscape and priorities of Wales are different to those in England.
 - Engagement with UK Government may be different for the pilot fund compared to the full SPF programme.
 - A factual core script on Welsh Government positions and the SPF to be developed to support Members in their discussions with the stakeholders they represent and the UK Government.

5. Any other business and concluding remarks (11:55 – 12:00)

- The Chair stated that the next meeting would take place in February following the UK Government's publication of the prospectus for the pilot year.
- 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
Cardiff University	Professor Calvin Jones, Deputy Dean for Public Value and External Relations
Gower College Swansea	Cath Jenkins, Employability Partnerships and Programmes Manager
Natural Resources Wales	Alan Hunt, Senior Specialist Advisor
Wales Council for Voluntary Action	Matthew Brown, Director of Operations
Colleges Wales	Lisa Thomas, Head of The College, Merthyr
Wales TUC	Nisreen Mansour, Policy Officer
South East Wales Partnership	Nicola Somerville, Head of Business Development and Inclusive Growth, Cardiff Capital Region City Deal
Growing Mid Wales Partnership	Cllr Rosemarie Harris, Leader, Powys Council
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
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

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
Alison Sandford	Head of Partnership Working, WEFO
Anton Orzel	Head of Regional Investment Policy, WEFO
Paula Young	Project Manager, Regional Investment - WEFO
Mike Richards	Communications Manager, WEFO
Sheilah Seymour	Head of Research and Analysis, WEFO
Geraint Green	Head of Programme Management (ESF and ETC), WEFO
Helen Minnice-Smith	Agriculture & Climate Change Policy Adviser – Economy, Skills and Natural Resources
Ceri Edwards	Senior Policy Manager, WEFO
Tom Brown	Senior Policy Manager, WEFO
Michelle Holland	Regional Investment Support Officer, WEFO