

## Agenda – Public Accounts Committee

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Meeting Venue:

For further information contact:

Video Conference via Zoom

Fay Bowen

Meeting date: 8 February 2021

Committee Clerk

Meeting time: 08.30

0300 200 6565

[SeneddPAC@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddPAC@senedd.wales)

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### (Private Pre-meeting)

(09.00 – 09.15)

In accordance with Standing Order 34.19, the Chair has determined that the public are excluded from the Committee's meeting in order to protect public health. This meeting will be broadcast live on [www.senedd.tv](http://www.senedd.tv)

### 1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(09.15)

### 2 Paper(s) to note

(09.15 – 09.30)

#### 2a Auditor General for Wales Report: Doing it Differently, Doing it Right? Governance in the NHS during the COVID-19 crisis – Key themes, lessons and opportunities

PAC(5)-05-21 PTN1 – [Auditor General for Wales Report](#): Doing it Differently, Doing it Right? Governance in the NHS during the COVID-19 crisis – Key themes, lessons and opportunities

#### 2b Inquiry into COVID-19 and its impact on matters relating to the Public Accounts Committee's remit: Letter from the Welsh Government (28 January 2021)

(Pages 1 – 8)

#### 2c Cardiff Airport: Letter from the Welsh Government (1 February 2021)

(Pages 9 – 12)



**2d Ensuring Value for Money from Rural Development Grants Made Without Competition: Letter from the Welsh Government (1 February 2021)**  
(Pages 13 – 121)

**3 Reflections on the Fifth Assembly/Senedd: Welsh Government – Economy, Skills and Natural Resources**  
(09.30 – 10.30) (Pages 122 – 141)

Research Briefing

PAC(5)–05–21 Paper 1 – Welsh Government

Andrew Slade – Director General, Economy, Skills and Natural Resources Group

Sioned Evans – Director, Business and Regions, Welsh Government

**(Break)**

(10.30 – 10.40)

**4 Reflections on the Fifth Assembly/Senedd: Welsh Government – Education and Public Services**  
(10.40 – 11.40) (Pages 142 – 148)

Research Briefing

Tracey Burke – Director General, Education and Public Services Group

Steve Davies – Director, Education Directorate

**5 Scrutiny of Accounts 2019–20: Consideration of the Response from the Senedd Commission**  
(11.40 – 12.00) (Pages 149 – 154)

PAC(5)–05–21 Paper 2 – Response from the Senedd Commission

**6 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from the meeting for the following business:**

(12.00)

Item 7 of today's meeting and the meeting on 22 February 2021

## **7 Reflections on the Fifth Assembly/Senedd: Consideration of evidence received**

(12.00 – 12.30)



**Tracey Burke**

Cyfarwyddwr Cyffredinol / Director General

Y Grŵp Addysg a Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus  
Education and Public Services Group

Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Nick Ramsay MS  
Chair  
Public Accounts Committee  
Senedd Cymru  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

28 January 2021

Dear Mr Ramsay,

Following my attendance at Public Accounts Committee on 30 November, and your subsequent follow up letter of 9 December, please find enclosed the additional information I agreed to share and my responses to the further points raised.

I would, of course, be happy to provide any further information or clarification requested by Committee.

Yours sincerely

Tracey Burke



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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

## Public Accounts Committee: 30 November 2020

### Follow-up Actions (Tracey Burke, Director General, Education & Public Services)

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**School attendance** - *We would welcome analysis to better understand the pattern of attendance, particularly whether there is any correlation with areas of deprivation.*

Since the start of the academic year we published weekly management information on pupils present in maintained schools. (This can be accessed here: <https://gov.wales/pupils-present-maintained-schools>)

We analysed attendance rates in November and December using the Welsh index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) 2019 as our measure of deprivation and there is a clear pattern. As deprivation increases then attendance decreases. The date range was chosen to avoid the impacts of the firebreak and the decision by some Local Authorities to close their schools before the end of term in December.

We will continue to provide support to the most vulnerable families and target our initial efforts at making sure those most in need have access to help when they need it. This can be demonstrated by our prioritisation of funding for free school meals, increase in funding for PDG access and continuation of PDG funding to schools.

In addition, we will continue to work with Local Authorities, schools and parents, to encourage increased attendance at our schools when face-to-face learning for all returns. However, the most important thing at this time is to ensure that communication and engagement continues so schools, settings, Local Authorities and families understand any barriers to learners returning to school and identify any further support needed.

**Support** - *Update on work undertaken to assist learners from the Gypsy and Traveller Community*

The Gypsy Traveller (GT) Forum and the Minority Ethnic Achievement Local Authority (MEALA) Group continue to regularly discuss the challenges associated with supporting Gypsy and Traveller learners during the pandemic. The network met to discuss the challenges and return to school rates for these learners on 11 September 2020. This an on-going agenda item and was also discussed at their last meeting on 13 November. Local Authority services continue to monitor the situation with regards to education support for these learners and to provide all the support they are able. They have shared best practice with us and across the network via the MEALA and GT forum. The groups are meeting again on 29 January to specifically discuss Gypsy and Traveller learner challenges in accessing education and effective practice in supporting their education.

On 8 September, I wrote to the Committee providing information on support for digitally excluded learners and broadband access on traveller sites. At that time we had identified that 19% had "poor access", 25% had some form of access, 19% may

have “good access” and that for 37% of pitches, there was insufficient information to understand if or how residents might access the internet.

Over the summer we wrote to all Local Authorities with public Gypsy and Traveller sites to remind them that internet access is becoming an essential service and to offer funding at up to 100% from our Sites Capital Grant for projects aimed at overcoming infrastructure barriers to internet access. Further information about this funding was provided at the All-Wales Local Authority engagement event in mid-September.

We have worked extensively with Local Authorities throughout Wales to improve our understanding of the uptake of internet services and the barriers to accessing them on sites. Feedback from Local Authorities has shown that barriers to internet access can be categorised as physical infrastructure barriers, socio-economic barriers, and digital exclusion barriers. Evidence is emerging that ensuring access to fixed broadband on the same basis as those in conventional housing is an important step and is the preference for some, although there are significant additional issues for some residents on sites around affordability.

We have now confirmed that all socially-rented Gypsy and Traveller sites in Wales have fixed line broadband available locally, with 13 sites having access to fast speeds in their area, one site having access to average speeds and eight sites having access to slow speeds in their area, however at some sites additional infrastructure is required to make lines available to residents. We are working with Local Authorities to confirm the sites affected.

Officials have met with eight Local Authorities, with a total of 11 sites, since the beginning of October to explore options for improving access to broadband. This represents some 64% of the pitches in Wales. Local Authorities are following through individually agreed actions and we are in regular discussion about the uptake of internet provision.

We are also working with Local Authorities to develop a pilot for low-cost area networks similar to those seen in other social housing settings, as a means to address economic barriers. We have identified two sites that may have some coverage through BT hotspots and we are exploring options for the provision of vouchers to allow access. We are also working to explore the expansion of these hotspots to bring more sites into coverage.

**Self Isolation - *Concerns about different approaches taken by schools throughout Wales regarding the self-isolation rules?***

Drawing on the experience of those working with education settings such as the TTP Teams and the Health Protection Teams and reflecting on feedback from key stakeholders, we have worked with Public Health Wales and the TTP team to produce additional guidance for schools. This guidance seeks to clarify the measures that schools/settings can take to help keep the number of pupils and staff members who need to self-isolate following a positive case to a minimum. It also provides clarity on the purpose of self-isolation, who should self-isolate and when. (The guidance can be accessed here:

<https://gov.wales/operational-guidance-schools-and-settings-support-limited-attendance>)

**Blended Learning** - *Can you keep us updated and provide us with the outcome of the Blended Working Group's work when available, including that about addressing digital exclusion?*

We recognise the challenge facing learners, teachers and leaders as a result of Covid-19, and we acknowledge that digital responses and solutions may not be as suitable for some as they are for others.

The Blended Learning Working Group, consists of officers from Welsh Government, Local Authorities and the Regional Consortia and is tasked with addressing issues of equity of access to learning in periods of disruption. The Working Group has explored how we can best gain an insight into the existing blended learning provision, solutions and guidance, including digital and non-digital, from a central, regional and local perspective. The Working Group has also identified five system level challenges, and we are now mobilising national engagement with each Local Authority to establish a national baseline of the current provision at school and Local Authority Level.

In terms of addressing digital exclusion, schools in Wales remain well provisioned with access to digital services and infrastructure through the Hwb EdTech programme. We have already seen the distribution over 97,000 end-user devices to Local Authorities, with the remaining 35,000 ordered devices expected over the coming weeks.

At the outset of the pandemic, the Minister for Education committed up to £3 million (from within the £30 million 2020/21 Hwb EdTech capital funding allocation) to specifically support digitally excluded learners in maintained schools where there was no existing provision in place from their school or Local Authority. Working with their schools, Local Authorities utilised the funding to provide digitally excluded learners with repurposed school devices and 4G MiFi connectivity where required. Based on the demand identified by schools and Local Authorities, there have been 10,848 MiFi devices and 9,717 software licences funded by the Welsh Government across Wales.

Some Local Authorities have since reported that a small number of families have since contacted their schools for additional support. Officials have been working with all Local Authorities to establish a national baseline of the current digital provision level for learners and staff.

The Hwb platform also continues to play a crucial role in supporting the delivery of education during this incredibly challenging period. Usage of the Hwb platform has exploded since remote learning re-convened this term. Hwb is currently delivering a daily average of up to 50 logins a second, which provides learners and practitioners with access to our Hwb digital services including email and online learning tools. The platform itself is recording record logins of over 337,000, with over 1 million page views per day.

**Sharing best practice** - *We would welcome more information about the case studies and the work carried out by Estyn. How is this being used to drive improvement and what evidence is there that it is making a difference.*

We worked with schools to launch a new collection of Covid-19 playlists on Hwb to celebrate and share distance-learning practices. A range of resources have been published providing examples of how different schools and settings have responded to key elements of the pandemic – from reopening to using the Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards funding. Regular updates will continue to be added to these ‘live’ resources. (The playlists can be accessed here:

<https://hwb.gov.wales/distance-learning/sharing-our-experiences/>)

The professional learning journey (PLJ) has been developed to help guide schools through the structural and professional learning aspects of preparing for Curriculum for Wales. It helps schools find their way through the different models for professional learning, and plan their own school’s journey. Further work on the next phase of PLJ is underway and further playlists and resources will continue to be added to the Hwb in the coming months. (Resources can be accessed here:

<https://hwb.gov.wales/professional-development/professional-learning-journey/>).

Our Talk Pedagogy, Think Learning project provides a digital space to share practice and support collaboration within and across our schools to share pedagogy and practice. It helps practitioners to find out what others are doing and what is working through sharing practice and being able to collaborate, as well as engage in professional learning opportunities regarding pedagogy and the new curriculum and engage in conversation about pedagogy in relation to blended learning. During the Covid-19 period the project has been focused to provide opportunities for collaborative professional learning by sharing experiences of ‘what works’, and perhaps ‘what has not worked’, which will be of benefit as we move beyond the pandemic. (Talk Pedagogy, Think Learning can be accessed here:

<https://hwb.gov.wales/professional-development/national-pedagogy-project>)

Estyn’s report was published on 15 January, and we will work with Estyn and the regions to ensure that the lessons learned from this are implemented. (A copy of the report can be accessed here:

<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/thematic-report/local-authority-and-regional-consortia-support-schools-and-prus-response-covid-19>)

We have also analysed the Lessons Learned Report from the Stay Safe Stay Learning programme in the spring and will use these to determine next steps, especially in relation to remote learning and the operation of schools for the rest of this school year.

**Burdens on schools** - *You told the Committee that Welsh Government has reduced the burdens placed on schools during the pandemic. We welcome the steps taken to reduce the pressure on schools, but would like more detail on the changes you have introduced, about the decision-making that led to them and what assessment has been made that they make a difference. Will these remain in place in the post Covid-19 world?*



While we are facing great uncertainties across the Education system, we seek to support our learners in the best way possible. In this context, we recognise that the pressures resulting from Covid-19 have meant increasing expectations on schools and other educational settings, and therefore, in the broadest possible sense, on the staff working to support learners.

In response, we have taken wide-ranging actions to introduce greater flexibilities and ease regulatory requirements on the school system.

It was clear from the impact of the Covid-19 that many of the normal statutory requirements placed on schools, with respect to the reporting of pupil attainment and attendance data, would not be reasonable. As such, we undertook a public consultation with stakeholders to bring into force The Relaxation of School Reporting Requirements (Wales) (Coronavirus) Regulations, which permanently revoked school target setting requirements and relaxed a number of other school reporting requirements for 2019/20.

The vast majority of responses were in favour of the proposals and felt that they were sensible and fair, would reduce the administrative burden on schools and remove pressures. The proposed changes were communicated to schools early, and in advance of the consultation and legislative process. This was done in order to provide schools with as much notice as possible. Specifically, the regulatory changes include:

- Revoking requirement for schools to set and publish performance and absence targets that are then agreed by Local Authorities.
- Excluding data on authorised and unauthorised absences in 2019/20 from being published in any school prospectus.
- Removing the requirement for governing body annual reports to include 2019/20 performance and attendance data.
- Modifying requirements on reports to parents to a “reasonable endeavours” basis for the 2019/20 school year, with the exception of the requirement to provide a school leaver’s report
- Removing the duties on governing bodies and Local Authorities to provide data to Local Authorities and Welsh Ministers, respectively, on teacher assessment outcomes and authorised or unauthorised absence for the pupils registered at schools in the 2019/20 school year.

We will shortly be consulting on similar proposals to relax some of these reporting requirements for 2020/21. These early and clear actions will have a positive impact on schools. Consultation responses should also help to reaffirm feedback from last year’s consultation, that these changes are valued by stakeholders and are making a positive difference in reducing bureaucracy and supporting flexibility where necessary in schools. In addition to the regulatory changes above, other interventions that have been undertaken to date include:

- Early clarity of extending the suspension of Key Stage 4 and legacy sixth form performance measures to the 2020/21 academic year.
- Suspending the national schools categorisation process.
- Relaxation of certain requirements relating to school admissions appeals.

- Disapplication of changing of school session times requirements.
- Modification to the School Organisation Code.
- Modification to pupil registration.
- Extension to the deadline for notifying Welsh Ministers of school term dates.
- Provision of extra planning days at the start of autumn term 2020/21.
- Modification of Curriculum and Assessment Requirements to a Reasonable Endeavours Basis.

These interventions have had an immediate effect in reducing the burden on schools generally and have provided increased flexibility to schools. Additionally, much of this activity was undertaken early. Going forward, we will keep these interventions under review and address any required changes as appropriate.

**Examination arrangements** - *The level of uncertainty for learners and teachers alike is unhelpful and we are concerned about the additional stress this is causing. We urge the findings of the Group to be considered and any subsequent Ministerial announcements to be made as soon as possible in the new year.*

As noted above, we are very conscious of the uncertainties faced right across the Education system. The Minister for Education announced the detailed approach that would be taken to qualifications on 16 December, having received policy proposals from the Design and Delivery Advisory Group and accepting them in full. In light of the move to remote learning for most learners until at least 29 January, Qualifications Wales announced the cancellation of the internal assessment window and the Design and Delivery Advisory Group reconvened to develop proposals that prioritised learner wellbeing and public confidence in this new situation. The Minister for Education made an announcement on 20 January on the advice of the Design and Delivery Group, confirming her intention to move to Centre-Determined Grades, based on evidence of learning and supported by an assessment framework to be developed and published by WJEC, working with Qualifications Wales, and supported by the Design and Delivery Advisory Group. The Group are now working on possible details around this to provide further clarity and certainty to learners, parents, teachers, and lecturers as soon as possible.

Simon Jones  
Director, Economic Infrastructure  
Department for Economy and Transport

Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Nick Ramsay MS  
Chair – Public Accounts Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
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1 February 2021

Dear Chair

## **CARDIFF AIRPORT**

Thank you for your letter dated 14 December to Andrew Slade. During the evidence session on Cardiff Airport that we attended with Public Accounts Committee on 16 November 2020, we undertook to write to you to provide further information on how the interest on the commercial loans is managed, along with the outcome of appointing the new Chair of Holdco. I have addressed the above and each of the points raised in your letter below.

### **Airport Chair and Personnel**

I recognise that the timings of the changes to the executive team at Cardiff International Airport Ltd (CIAL) during 2020 were unfortunate, particularly considering the enormous challenges that the airport has been facing since March with the ongoing impact of COVID-19. As noted, the timing of the incoming Chair, Wayne Harvey, was outside of our control, and we were very grateful to Roger Lewis for agreeing to extend his tenure in order to ensure consistency until Wayne could take up his new role. The Finance Director simply sought alternative employment but fulfilled his contractual obligations with CIAL – including any notice period. HoldCo agreed to release of the then CEO (Deb Barber) – a decision which was not taken lightly, but one that ensured the priority needed to maintain a quality, focussed and passionate leadership during the most testing time in the airport's history, since our acquisition in 2013. It was vital that we continued to have a clear, trusted and recognised leadership structure for both the business and its employees, and I am very pleased with Spencer Birns performance as interim CEO to date. Future changes to the CIAL board will remain under review by HoldCo and any future significant changes will be staggered, where possible, in order to maintain a business as usual approach.



**Chair of Holdco**

I officially resigned as a Director and Chair of Holdco on the 30th November 2020. Jason Thomas – Director of Culture, Sport and Tourism within the Welsh Government was identified as a potential replacement and advice was issued to the Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales to formally begin the process of appointing Jason as an interim Director. This advice was agreed and HoldCo is currently in the process of completing the administrative arrangements to appoint Jason as Director and they will then decide on the Chair. This is an interim appointment until we have clarity on the future direction of Cardiff Airport. Once that has been agreed we will undertake a formal review of the current HoldCo arrangements

**Loans**

We understand the Committee’s concerns over reporting methods between CIAL and the Welsh Government over what loans and their values have been provided to the airport since acquisition. For the purposes of transparency, I will commit to publishing the value of loans provided to the airport on the Welsh Government website, however I will not be able to provide any of the details behind the loan for reasons of commercial sensitivity.

The total value of the 27 September 2019 loan agreement announced on 21 October 2019 is for the total sum of £71.59m.

The total debt outstanding at the time of executing the 27 September 2019 WG loan agreement was £43,599,174. This was represented as follows:

Capital sum, drawn down in tranches over a period of time:	£38,200,000
Accrued interest, capitalised to the debt monthly:	£5,399,174
Overall loan balance at completion date:	£43,599,174 Dr

Interest continues to accrue and is capitalised to the balance of the debt monthly, for 72 months following completion.

The September 2019 loan agreement also includes £21.2m of “new money” and an option for a further £6.8m of “new money” which is subject to further Financial Due Diligence and Ministerial Approval.

£16.4m has been paid out of the September 2019 loan facility making the actual total of payments drawn down by Cardiff Airport to date £54.6m. The loan is repayable over 19 years with the first payment due on 31 March 2026. The final repayment date is 31 March 2044.

Interest on the loan facility between the Welsh Ministers and CIAL is calculated on the daily outstanding balance and is applied to the capital balance monthly. For the current loan, this arrangement is in place for 72 months following drawdown of the loan in September 2019.

The most recent financial support announced for Cardiff Airport was a separate emergency loan facility for the sum of £4.8m to support the Airport through the pandemic.

We are not in position to provide any details relating to future funding for Cardiff Airport at present. Officials are working very closely with CIAL’s executive board to evaluate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Airport including future funding actions in relation to recovery options.

## **Role of UK Government**

We were very disappointed to hear that the UK Government's new £100m airport COVID support package was for English airports only. Ministers continue to press the UK Government for detail on its Airport support scheme but nothing has been forthcoming despite repeated requests since it was first announced in November.

The UK Treasury has indicated a funding consequential in relation to this scheme is reflected within our existing Covid Guarantee, but we will not have certainty until we see the breakdown of the Guarantee as part of the UK Government Supplementary Estimates process.

Ministers have welcomed the appointment of Sir Peter Hendy by the Secretary of State for Transport to undertake the UK Government's Union Connectivity Review and they have indicated that they hope this goes some way to levelling up its own connectivity responsibilities across the UK and in Wales. Towards the end of last year, the Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales met with Sir Peter to discuss our concerns and it was made clear that Welsh Government would support a review where it leads to the UK Government adequately funding its existing responsibilities to Wales in areas such as rail infrastructure and aviation.

Ministers are content that Sir Peter will do an excellent job of reviewing the rail and aviation situation, but they have noted that he has been hampered by not being asked to include broadband in his remit. Given the recent changes to working patterns and to people's lives it is more important than ever that UK Government fulfil its reserved obligations to ensure that every premises in Wales has access to a least Superfast broadband.

Despite the ambitions set out in the UK Government's Aviation 2050 strategy, the UK Government's policy decisions have been focussed significantly on the larger commercial airports in England, so regional airports like Cardiff appear to be less important in UK policy terms.

Unlike other parts of Europe, before and during the COVID crisis the UK Government has prohibited financial support for safety and security – the cost burden on smaller airports can equate to as much as 30% of their operating expenses. Ministers continue to call on the UK Government to change its position in relation to 'allowable aid' for safety and security costs for airports – which would go some way towards levelling the playing field particularly for those airports that are and will continue to struggle as a result of the pandemic.

We continue to have discussions with DfT about the need to have a UK strategy on the restart and recovery of the aviation sector. To date no strategy has been published or indeed shared with us.

Towards the end of 2019, the Minister launched a consultation on Llwybr Newydd: a new Wales transport strategy which sets out our future ambitions for the whole of the transport sector in Wales which includes our ongoing support for Cardiff Airport.

## **Future of the Airport**

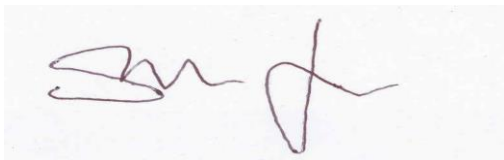
We continue to work closely with the CIAL executive team and will be working with them to revisit the future strategy for the airport, which will include a revision of its Masterplan to reflect the impact and changes that COVID-19 has brought to the airport.

I welcome the Committee's recognition of the difficulties that we, CIAL and the aviation sector now faces, and welcome the opportunity to work with the next Committee Chair and its Members to re-establish the airport as we come out of the pandemic.

Ministers are pleased that across the UK we now have mandatory testing for those passengers arriving into the UK, and hope that this will help the market and industry to recover. This cooperative approach with the UK Government and other devolved nations was vital to assist economic recovery and to protect the whole of the United Kingdom and its citizens.

On a final note, we see very strong benefits to the business of Cardiff Airport following the recent announcement that low cost carrier Wizz Air will be calling CIAL its home and introducing nine new routes from Cardiff. I can confirm that the Welsh Government has provided no incentives to the airline – this is a commercial relationship between the airport and Wizz Air, and as such any agreements between the two parties are commercial in nature. This shows considerable confidence in the airport from Wizz Air. This is a very exciting new opportunity for CIAL at a time when it is sorely needed.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Simon Jones', is centered on a light-colored rectangular background.

Simon Jones  
Director, Economic Infrastructure

Nick Ramsay MS  
Chair  
Public Accounts Committee  
National Assembly for Wales

1 February 2021

Dear Chair

Thank you for your letter of 3 November 2020 confirming the supplementary information we agreed to provide during the meeting of the Public Accounts Committee on 5 October 2020, and setting out a number of additional points raised by members during the Committee's consideration of the evidence on Rural Development Grants. Andrew has asked me to respond.

The information requested is set out below and numbered for convenience.

- 1. A copy of the league table showing compliance with the Rural Development Programme (RDP) rules and information relating to the disallowance rate across all EU Member States and for other parts of the UK**

See attached league table at Annex A.

- 2. Details of the proportion of RDP awards in Wales submitted from public procurement, expressions of interest and via the direct application process (now discontinued but there are still schemes in operation funded this way)**

Of the 2,954 approved socio-economic projects, excluding the Land based schemes (which are also selected via expressions of interest):

- 9 were selected by public procurement (0.3%);
- 2,905 were selected by expressions of interest (98.3%);
- 40 were selected via direct application (1.4%).

- 3. A copy of the latest Annual Implementation Report**

The latest Annual Implementation Report (AIR) presented to the Wales Programme Monitoring Committee European Structural & Investment Funds 2014 – 2020 in September 2020 is at Annex B.

**4. You referred to the suite of RDP projects, a total of around 2,900. How many of these projects were linked to the ‘LEADER project’ grant scheme?**

See [table](#) below, showing all approved socio-economic projects, of which there are 75 approved Leader Projects:

Scheme	Number of Scheme Rounds	Scheme Allocation	Applications Received	Appraisals Complete	Applications Approved	Total committed to projects	Total Spend
Cooperation & Supply Chain Development Scheme*	7	£ 76,253,758	72	65	52	£ 62,168,477	£ 24,837,211
Co-operative Forest Planning Scheme	2	£ 257,427	4	4	1	£ 160,280	£ -
Enabling Natural Resources and Wellbeing Scheme	2	£ 26,000,000	0	0	0	£ -	£ -
European Innovation Partnership	N/A	£ 2,475,000	7	7	1	£ 2,475,000	£ 604,254
Farm & Forestry Infrastructure	N/A	£ 150,000	0	0	0	£ -	£ -
Farm Business Grant Scheme	7	£ 16,815,612	2,919	2,919	2,359	£ 16,800,669	£ 15,166,863
Food Business Investment Scheme*	8	£ 51,617,185	122	104	96	£ 42,867,918	£ 28,745,045
Knowledge Transfer & Innovation*	N/A	£ 96,513,239	15	15	15	£ 91,641,812	£ 42,981,963
LEADER	N/A	£ 47,637,182	75	75	75	£ 47,651,971	£ 23,888,125
Rural Business Advisory Service*	N/A	£ 11,001,524	5	5	5	£ 12,433,414	£ 6,457,006
Rural Business Investment Scheme*	N/A	£ 11,508,765	2	2	2	£ 9,167,820	£ 2,552,813
Rural Community Development Fund*	7	£ 29,031,669	225	223	188	£ 27,365,708	£ 13,038,838
Sustainable Management Scheme	5	£ 24,895,432	52	35	33	£ 15,918,714	£ 6,283,310
Sustainable Production Grant	6	£ 35,777,342	73	73	72	£ 21,743,538	£ 12,376,655
Technical Assistance	N/A	£ 41,800,123	8	8	8	£ 32,535,049	£ 17,105,423
Timber Business Investment Scheme	4	£ 6,291,637	65	63	58	£ 5,306,412	£ 4,107,717
<b>Socio-Economic Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>£ 478,025,895</b>	<b>3,644</b>	<b>3,698</b>	<b>2,965</b>	<b>£ 388,036,781</b>	<b>£ 198,145,221</b>

Source: WEFO, 31-09-2020

**5. You clarified that RDP funding priorities and the total amount of funding available is always subject to Ministerial approval but Ministers are not involved in the detailed sign-off of smaller projects. Please could you clarify the circumstances that might determine whether Ministers are engaged with project level decisions given that, given your evidence, there is no threshold based simply on project value/size. Can you also confirm whether you accept, given what paragraph 1.4 in the Auditor General’s report says, that there should have been some engagement on the approach of granting funds without using competition or other ways of ensuring value for money.**

Ministerial agreement is required to approve schemes and scheme windows, to ensure available funding aligns with the priorities of the Welsh Government. The schemes must also meet the priorities of the RDP, as set out by the European Commission. The relevant Minister also signs off the high-level objectives of a scheme and the level of funding allocated.

Ministers are not ordinarily invited to sign off individual projects, and this has not been the practice through the 2014-20 RDP. Once Ministerial clearance has been obtained for a scheme window and budget allocation, officials are responsible for assessing projects based on the specific criteria approved by the Programme Monitoring Committee, which must be met by applicants.

To ensure fair and open selection, applicants are competitively assessed against the approved criteria and projects are selected in merit order, and are awarded grant funding provided they meet eligibility and due diligence criteria.

The direct application approach was not considered at the time to be a contentious mechanism, and allowed cooperative delivery of strategic projects. With the benefit of



hindsight, we acknowledge it would have been appropriate to engage with Ministers.

- 6. Paragraph 1.3 of the Auditor General's report states that the Welsh Government decided to make awards without competition, based on its own interpretation of EU Regulations. During our questioning your answer was not clear as to whether Welsh Government officials took steps to ensure that their interpretation of the Regulations was the correct interpretation. Please could you confirm whether any legal advice was sought at the time from within Welsh Government. Furthermore, what advice was received from the European Commission in relation to whether the direct applications approach was compliant. If no advice was sought, why not? How would the same situation be handled now?**

All Member States are responsible for implementation of CAP funding and are responsible for the interpretation EU regulations. The European Commission do offer technical guidance, but that guidance covers broad areas. The table at question 1 shows since 2013 some €7.7bn of disallowance has been imposed by the European Commission to Member states across Europe for failing to correctly interpret EU regulations.

The European Commission were present at the Programme Monitoring Committee where the issue of direct applications was raised in and did not object or make comment on this approach being taken forward. Officials at that time were confident that the approach was in accordance with the EU regulations.

However, we acknowledge there is no record of the European Commission being explicitly asked about their opinion on a direct application approach or legal advice being sought, and again, with the benefit of hindsight, we agree the direct application approach was one that the Welsh Government should have sought specific advice on.

- 7. You spoke about the two investment panels that have been established following the move of the scheme management unit into Rural Payments Wales to oversee and monitor value for money of investments. Given these sit within the internal RDP machinery, we asked about the merits of having greater external scrutiny and the possibility of an independent investment panel. We were told that this is not specifically required within the Regulations governing the RDP, but the Welsh Government are exploring this aspect as its moves to managing and awarding funding originating from the UK, rather than from the EU. Please could you provide details of options for programme/project evaluations that are being explored by the Welsh Government?**

We fully acknowledge the benefits of having greater external scrutiny and are committed to achieve appropriate independent representation in the award of grants for future domestic RDP schemes.

Officials are in dialogue with colleagues from the Grants Centre of Excellence regarding scheme administration and governance. RPW are exploring the option to either use an existing Welsh Government panel that includes independent members, or the possibility

of setting up panel with independent members specifically for RDP domestic grants.

- 8. We discussed the Welsh Government's commitments for the remaining rural development programme funding following the UK's exit from the EU. We heard that taking the RDP in its entirety, the Welsh Government is currently at around 85 per cent, and based on the projects 'in flight', this commitment level will be taken up to 95 per cent by the end of the year. Can you clarify what projects will make up the 'in flight' ones you described in your evidence that would take you from 85% to 95% and whether you have any specific priorities in mind for further commitments in the context of the Ministers desire for some over commitment?**

'In flight' projects, are projects that have submitted their applications but have not yet been offered a commitment or, if offered, have not yet accepted. Currently we have in flight projects across most schemes and measures within the RDP, from land based schemes to Socio-economic measures.

In September 2020 the Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs published a Written Statement setting out a range of schemes to be delivered from now until the end of 2023, and the priorities for investment. A full list of the schemes is set out in an annex to the statement. Please note that the list of schemes includes a level of over-commitment to ensure full spend of the RDP.

These schemes will fully commit the RDP at a scheme level. As the programme is now fully allocated, there is no intention to make any further schemes available through the RDP.

- 9. Finally, it would be helpful if you could keep us updated on approaches, as they emerge, to the funding arrangements that will replace Rural Development Funds once the UK has left the EU, including who will scrutinise Welsh Government grant funding allocation controls if EU Commission auditors are no longer responsible for doing so?**

We are in the process of designing a domestic rural development programme, which will utilise replacement funding provided by HM Treasury through the UK Government Comprehensive Spending Review, following the UK's exit from the European Union.

On 16 November the Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs published a statement setting out plans to expand the structure provided by retained EU Law, to incorporate the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and Environment (Wales) Act 2015 and establish a non-statutory Rural Development Advisory Board. The Board will advise on the content and delivery of the domestic rural support programme, taking into account the responses to the recent consultation on "Sustainable Farming and Our Land: Proposals to continue and simplify Agricultural Support for Farmers and the Rural Economy"

Following EU exit, the role of scrutinising Welsh Government grant funding allocation controls falls to the Auditor General (Audit Wales) whose role includes examining how

public bodies manage and spend public money, including how they achieve value in the delivery of public services.

In addition to the answers to your questions above we undertook to keep you informed of the progress of the contradictory process with the Commission on potential disallowance. I can confirm that a figure has been agreed, although has not yet been subject to a formal decision notice. The agreed disallowance for the direct application issue has reduced from the initial Commission proposal of €33,140,551 to €3,412,104.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Render". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'T'.

**Tim Render**  
Director  
Land Nature and Food

## Disallowance League Table (source: UK Coordinating Body) Oct 2020

Table 1 - Total amount of disallowance across the EU and which includes all schemes – in order of disallowance amount.

	<u>Country</u>	<u>Total Amount (€) of Disallowance</u>
1	France (FR)	€ 2,698,932,619
2	Italy (IT)	€ 1,044,087,177
3	Romania (RO)	€ 643,723,606
4	UK (GB)	€ 620,441,069
5	Poland (PL)	€ 605,318,625
6	Spain (ES)	€ 444,397,667
7	Greece (GR)	€ 384,029,827
8	Portugal (PT)	€ 306,617,615
9	Hungary (HU)	€ 162,420,250
10	Bulgaria (BG)	€ 143,906,926
11	Slovakia (SK)	€ 95,013,353
12	Netherlands (NL)	€ 94,162,285
13	Sweden (SE)	€ 88,079,255
14	Ireland (IE)	€ 84,402,887
15	Germany (DE)	€ 74,941,643
16	Lithuania (LT)	€ 51,611,183
17	Czech Republic (CZ)	€ 47,011,052
18	Denmark (DK)	€ 39,812,937
19	Belgium (BE)	€ 32,301,695
20	Austria (AT)	€ 28,552,597
21	Finland (FI)	€ 21,702,152
22	Slovenia (SI)	€ 21,125,426
23	Croatia (HR)	€ 4,103,036
24	Luxembourg (LU)	€ 3,671,547
25	Latvia (LV)	€ 3,374,989
26	Cyprus (CY)	€ 2,873,972
27	Estonia (EE)	€ 2,358,294
28	Malta (MT)	€ 605,459

\*NB Figures include all Ad Hoc decisions published since March 2013 (Ad Hoc 40 – Ad Hoc 64)

## Disallowance League Table (source: UK Coordinating Body) Oct 2020

Table 2 – Total amount of disallowance across the EU compared against the total amount of funding received from the Commission from 2013 - 2019

	<u>Country</u>	<u>Total Amount of Financial Correction (€)</u>	<u>EAGF &amp; EAFRD Payments made to Member States (Financial Years 2013-2019) (€)</u>	<u>Total Financial Correction / EAGF &amp; EAFRD Payments (%)</u>
1	France (FR)	€ 2,698,932,619	€ 60,951,230,713	4.43
2	Romania (RO)	€ 643,723,606	€ 17,031,026,919	3.78
3	Portugal (PT)	€ 306,617,615	€ 8,670,003,978	3.54
4	Italy (IT)	€ 1,044,087,177	€ 35,780,011,903	2.92
5	Slovakia (SK)	€ 95,013,353	€ 3,925,207,728	2.42
6	Greece (GR)	€ 384,029,827	€ 17,051,018,880	2.25
7	UK (GB)	€ 620,441,069	€ 26,529,538,991	2.34
8	Bulgaria (BG)	€ 143,906,926	€ 6,542,033,383	2.20
9	Poland (PL)	€ 605,318,625	€ 29,976,490,179	2.02
10	Netherlands (NL)	€ 94,162,285	€ 5,852,002,529	1.61
11	Sweden (SE)	€ 88,079,255	€ 5,988,265,884	1.47
12	Hungary (HU)	€ 162,420,250	€ 11,190,808,725	1.45
13	Slovenia (SI)	€ 21,125,426	€ 1,669,127,817	1.27
14	Luxembourg (LU)	€ 3,671,547	€ 302,495,835	1.21
15	Lithuania (LT)	€ 51,611,183	€ 4,311,778,337	1.20
16	Spain (ES)	€ 444,397,667	€ 44,081,437,374	1.01
17	Ireland (IE)	€ 84,402,887	€ 10,394,213,351	0.81
18	Belgium (BE)	€ 32,301,695	€ 4,490,155,444	0.72
19	Malta (MT)	€ 605,459	€ 90,549,838	0.67
20	Denmark (DK)	€ 39,812,937	€ 6,553,790,908	0.61
21	Cyprus (CY)	€ 2,873,972	€ 487,917,588	0.59
22	Czech Republic (CZ)	€ 47,011,052	€ 8,097,093,323	0.58
23	Finland (FI)	€ 21,702,152	€ 5,640,502,328	0.38
24	Austria (AT)	€ 28,552,597	€ 8,241,389,151	0.35
25	Croatia (HR)	€ 4,103,036	€ 2,033,745,441	0.20
26	Germany (DE)	€ 74,941,643	€ 41,895,809,324	0.18
27	Estonia (EE)	€ 2,358,294	€ 1,521,761,030	0.15
28	Latvia (LV)	€ 3,374,989	€ 2,391,278,781	0.14

**Disallowance League Table (source: UK Coordinating Body)  
Oct 2020**

**Table 5 - Total amount of financial correction for each Paying Agency**

	<u>Paying Agency</u>	<u>Total Amount of Financial Correction (€)</u>	<u>EAGF &amp; EAFRD Payments made to Paying Agencies (Financial Year 2013 - 2018 (€)</u>	<u>Total Financial Correction / EAGF &amp; EAFRD Payments (%)</u>
1	RPA	€ 509,106,337	€ 17,210,271,195	2.96
2	DAERA	€ 39,036,922	€ 2,497,347,547	1.56
3	SGRPID	€ 69,193,388	€ 4,532,754,727	1.53
4	WG	€ 3,104,422	€ 2,289,165,519	0.14



The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development:  
Europe investing in rural areas

# Annual implementation report

## United Kingdom - Rural Development Programme (Regional) - Wales

Annual implementation report	
Period	01/01/2019 - 31/12/2019
Version	2019.0
Status - Current Node	Ready to send - Wales
National reference	
Monitoring committee approval date	09/09/2020
Programme Version in force	
CCI	2014UK06RDRP004
Programme type	Rural Development Programme
Country	United Kingdom
Region	Wales
Programming period	2014 - 2020
Version	4.1
Decision Number	C(2019)8982
Decision Date	11/12/2019
Managing authority	Welsh Government – Agriculture, Fisheries and Marine Group - Rural Economy & Legislation Division
Coordination body	UK Co-ordinating Body

## Table of contents

1. KEY INFORMATION ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME AND ITS PRIORITIES .....	4
1.a) Financial Data .....	4
1.b) Common and programme-specific indicators and quantified target values .....	4
1.b1) Overview table.....	4
1.c) Key information on RDP implementation based on data from a) and b) by Focus Area .....	13
1.d) Key information on achievements towards the milestones set in the performance Framework based on Table F .....	50
1.e) Other RDP specific element [optional].....	51
1.f) Where appropriate, the contribution to macro-regional and sea basin strategies.....	51
1.g) Currency rate used for conversion AIR (non EUR countries).....	54
2. THE PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE EVALUATION PLAN.....	55
2.a) Description of any modifications made to the evaluation plan in the RDP during the year, with their justification .....	55
2.b) A description of the evaluation activities undertaken during the year (in relation to section 3 of the evaluation plan).....	55
2.c) A description of activities undertaken in relation to the provision and management of data (in relation to section 4 of the evaluation plan).....	59
2.d) A list of completed evaluations, including references to where they have been published on-line.....	61
2.e) A summary of completed evaluations, focussing on evaluation findings .....	63
2.f) A description of communication activities undertaken in relation to publicising evaluation findings (in relation to section 6 of the evaluation plan) .....	66
2.g) Description of the follow-up given to evaluation results (in relation to section 6 of the evaluation plan) .....	67
3. ISSUES WHICH AFFECT THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PROGRAMME AND THE MEASURES TAKEN.....	68
3.a) Description of steps taken to ensure quality and effectiveness of programme implementation.....	68
3.b) Quality and efficient delivery mechanisms .....	71
4. STEPS TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND PROGRAMME PUBLICITY REQUIREMENTS.....	72
4.a) Action taken and state of play as regards the establishment of the NRN and the implementation of its action plan.....	72
4.a1) Actions taken and state of play as regards establishment of the NRN (governance structure and network support unit).....	72
4.a2) Actions taken and state of play as regards the implementation of the action plan.....	73
4.b) Steps taken to ensure that the programme is publicised (Article 13 of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014).....	76
5. ACTIONS TAKEN TO FULFIL EX ANTE CONDITIONALITIES .....	80
6. DESCRIPTION OF IMPLEMENTATION OF SUB-PROGRAMMES .....	81



7. ASSESSMENT OF THE INFORMATION AND PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME .....	82
8. IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIONS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE PRINCIPLES SET OUT IN ARTICLES 5, 7 AND 8 OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1303/2013.....	83
9. PROGRESS MADE IN ENSURING INTEGRATED APPROACH TO USE EAFRD AND OTHER UNION FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS.....	85
10. REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS (ARTICLE 46 OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1303/2013) .....	86
11. ENCODING TABLES FOR COMMON AND PROGRAMME-SPECIFIC INDICATORS AND QUANTIFIED TARGET VALUES.....	87
Annex II .....	88
Documents .....	100

# 1. KEY INFORMATION ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME AND ITS PRIORITIES

## 1.a) Financial Data

See annexed documents

## 1.b) Common and programme-specific indicators and quantified target values

### 1.b1) Overview table

Focus Area 1A						
Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2023
T1: percentage of expenditure under Articles 14, 15 and 35 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 in relation to the total expenditure for the RDP (focus area 1A)	2014-2019			6.74	23.76	28.37
	2014-2018			3.76	13.25	
	2014-2017			1.19	4.19	
	2014-2016					
	2014-2015					

Focus Area 1B						
Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2023
T2: Total number of cooperation operations supported under the cooperation measure (Article 35 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013) (groups, networks/clusters, pilot projects...) (focus area 1B)	2014-2019			173.00	36.19	478.00
	2014-2018			60.00	12.55	
	2014-2017			2.00	0.42	
	2014-2016					
	2014-2015					

Focus Area 1C						
Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2023
T3: Total number of participants trained under Article 14 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 (focus area 1C)	2014-2019			14,406.00	41.50	34,716.00
	2014-2018			10,079.00	29.03	
	2014-2017			5,021.00	14.46	
	2014-2016					
	2014-2015					

### Focus Area 2A

Focus Area 2A							
Target indicator name		Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2023
T4: percentage of agricultural holdings with RDP support for investments in restructuring or modernisation (focus area 2A)		2014-2019	7.56	75.01	6.35	63.00	10.08
		2014-2018	2.99	29.67	1.47	14.59	
		2014-2017	0.29	2.88	0.07	0.69	
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					
Measure	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	22,435,463.39	66.69	18,330,833.52	54.49	33,641,808.11
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	3,885,075.84	60.02	3,076,774.35	47.53	6,473,423.63
M04	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	30,016,251.37	63.36	20,631,371.67	43.55	47,374,830.90
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	618,750.00	3.25	79,817.88	0.42	19,028,270.53
Total	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	56,955,540.60	53.47	42,118,797.42	39.54	106,518,333.17

### Focus Area 2B

Focus Area 2B							
Target indicator name		Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2023
T5: percentage of agricultural holdings with RDP supported business development plan/investments for young farmers (focus area 2B)		2014-2019					0.73
		2014-2018					
		2014-2017					
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					
Measure	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	2,240,943.91				
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	611,771.10				
Total	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	2,852,715.01				

### Focus Area 3A

Focus Area 3A							
Target indicator name		Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2023
T6: percentage of agricultural holdings receiving support for participating in quality schemes, local markets and short supply circuits, and producer groups/organisations (focus area 3A)		2014-2019	0.60	87.71	0.42	61.40	0.68
		2014-2018	2.11	308.44	0.41	59.93	
		2014-2017					
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					
Measure	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	53,169,047.69	85.19	13,385,239.41	21.45	62,413,793.70
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	255,021.34	38.47	315,081.82	47.53	662,921.01
M04	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	46,732,268.76	77.99	30,146,853.03	50.31	59,917,712.73
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	3,682,366.32	7.98	2,755,948.42	5.97	46,169,008.65
Total	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	103,838,704.11	61.38	46,603,122.68	27.55	169,163,436.09

**Priority P4**

Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2023
T13: percentage of forestry land under management contracts to improve soil management and/or prevent soil erosion (focus area 4C)	2014-2019					0.00
	2014-2018					
	2014-2017					
	2014-2016					
	2014-2015					
T11: percentage of forestry land under management contracts to improve water management (focus area 4B)	2014-2019					0.00
	2014-2018					
	2014-2017					
	2014-2016					
	2014-2015					
T8: percentage of forest/other wooded area under management contracts supporting biodiversity (focus area 4A)	2014-2019			0.83	30.73	2.70
	2014-2018			0.75	27.77	
	2014-2017			0.23	8.52	
	2014-2016			0.20	7.41	
	2014-2015			0.01	0.37	
T12: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts to improve soil management and/or prevent soil erosion (focus area 4C)	2014-2019			4.46	89.46	4.99
	2014-2018			4.46	89.46	
	2014-2017			4.46	89.46	
	2014-2016			4.36	87.45	
	2014-2015					
T10: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts to improve water management (focus area 4B)	2014-2019			6.22	44.97	13.83
	2014-2018			6.22	44.97	
	2014-2017			6.22	44.97	
	2014-2016			3.14	22.70	
	2014-2015					

T9: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts supporting biodiversity and/or landscapes (focus area 4A)	2014-2019			44.72	115.40	38.75	
	2014-2018			44.72	115.40		
	2014-2017			44.72	115.40		
	2014-2016			20.94	54.03		
	2014-2015			1.60	4.13		
Measure	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	6,414,488.07	126.42	2,733,541.04	53.88	5,073,807.18
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	2,436,972.29	79.70	1,166,140.82	38.14	3,057,577.92
M04	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	82,439,341.12	139.45	44,434,335.49	75.16	59,116,341.63
M08	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	14,388,000.17	77.48	13,692,925.70	73.73	18,571,039.50
M10	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	200,917,940.06	72.69	155,405,021.40	56.22	276,414,061.61
M11	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	24,624,804.46	73.58	18,572,568.74	55.50	33,465,095.56
M15	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	0.00				
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	18,985,425.28	62.87	3,443,535.84	11.40	30,200,131.56
Total	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	350,206,971.45	82.23	239,448,069.03	56.22	425,898,054.96

Focus Area 5B							
Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2023	
T15: Total investment for energy efficiency (€) (focus area 5B)	2014-2019	14,508,002.03	71.75	14,508,002.03	71.75	20,219,521.05	
	2014-2018	11,587,950.75	57.31	9,380,795.88	46.39		
	2014-2017	1,586,895.45	7.85	1,586,895.45	7.85		
	2014-2016						
	2014-2015						
Measure	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	582,739.31	66.69	477,758.47	54.68	873,813.20
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	109,410.63	60.02	86,647.49	47.53	182,303.28
M04	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	7,777,351.73	94.73	5,598,467.26	68.19	8,210,187.71
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	309,375.00	106.78	39,908.93	13.77	289,739.21
Total	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	8,778,876.67	91.87	6,202,782.15	64.91	9,556,043.40

### Focus Area 5C

Target indicator name		Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2023
T16: Total investment in renewable energy production (€) (focus area 5C)		2014-2019	11,642,702.41	46.36	1,022,617.45	4.07	25,112,831.23
		2014-2018	1,633,794.74	6.51			
		2014-2017					
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					
Measure	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	582,739.31	66.69	477,758.39	54.68	873,813.20
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	86,202.48	60.02	68,267.67	47.53	143,632.88
M07	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	438,828.24	5.42	76,606.96	0.95	8,100,891.21
M08	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	1,304,518.83	21.41	430,627.14	7.07	6,091,735.76
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	309,375.00	20.41	39,908.92	2.63	1,515,652.96
Total	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	2,721,663.86	16.27	1,093,169.08	6.54	16,725,726.01

### Focus Area 5D

Target indicator name		Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2023
T18: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts targeting reduction of GHG and/or ammonia emissions (focus area 5D)		2014-2019			4.42	105.23	4.20
		2014-2018			4.42	105.23	
		2014-2017			4.42	105.23	
		2014-2016			3.11	74.04	
		2014-2015					
Measure	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	582,739.31	66.69	477,758.43	54.68	873,813.20
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	770,516.80	60.02	610,208.55	47.53	1,283,857.02
M04	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	10,311,902.42	184.39	1,526,445.29	27.29	5,592,579.87
M10	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	8,407,407.07	56.82	8,261,596.22	55.84	14,795,474.71
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	309,375.00	15.31	39,908.96	1.97	2,021,139.06
Total	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	20,381,940.60	82.97	10,915,917.45	44.43	24,566,863.86

Focus Area 5E							
Target indicator name		Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2023
T19: percentage of agricultural and forest land under management contracts contributing to carbon sequestration and conservation (focus area 5E)		2014-2019			0.13	57.78	0.22
		2014-2018			0.13	57.78	
		2014-2017			0.13	57.78	
		2014-2016			0.03	13.33	
		2014-2015					
Measure	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	582,739.31	66.69	477,758.47	54.68	873,813.20
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	521,155.66	92.89	174,870.41	31.17	561,028.93
M04	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	3,249,416.88	74.70	2,648,185.72	60.88	4,349,977.25
M08	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	22,650,656.78	185.42	9,384,205.16	76.82	12,215,687.80
M10	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	1,466,261.73	118.78	1,034,949.07	83.84	1,234,396.85
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	497,939.71	130.95	50,687.09	13.33	380,258.61
Total	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	28,968,170.07	147.68	13,770,655.92	70.20	19,615,162.64

Focus Area 6A							
Target indicator name		Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2023
T20: Jobs created in supported projects (focus area 6A)		2014-2019			2.00	0.26	765.00
		2014-2018			2.00	0.26	
		2014-2017					
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					
Measure	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	220,810.79	60.02	174,870.41	47.53	367,921.16
M06	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	16,867,573.90	124.65	893,773.07	6.61	13,531,661.22
M08	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	6,941,796.47	569.84	3,032,904.09	248.97	1,218,200.95
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	769,501.25	255.43	92,023.44	30.55	301,257.12
Total	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	24,799,682.41	160.84	4,193,571.01	27.20	15,419,040.45



**Focus Area 6B**

Focus Area 6B							
Target indicator name		Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2023
T23: Jobs created in supported projects (Leader) (focus area 6B)		2014-2019			12.00	12.00	100.00
		2014-2018			12.00	12.00	
		2014-2017					
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					
T22: percentage of rural population benefiting from improved services/infrastructures (focus area 6B)		2014-2019			2.34	5.14	45.53
		2014-2018			1.93	4.24	
		2014-2017			45.53	100.01	
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					
T21: percentage of rural population covered by local development strategies (focus area 6B)		2014-2019			45.53	100.01	45.53
		2014-2018			45.53	100.01	
		2014-2017			45.53	100.01	
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					
Measure	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	3,529,411.77	48.74	259,695.24	3.59	7,241,491.36
M07	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	22,845,174.42	94.55	9,683,347.16	40.07	24,163,254.89
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	70,104,059.48	133.94	16,777,983.14	32.06	52,339,864.54
M19	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	61,020,986.53	110.16	21,093,645.63	38.08	55,393,322.47
Total	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	157,499,632.20	113.20	47,814,671.17	34.36	139,137,933.26

**Focus Area 6C**

Focus Area 6C							
Target indicator name		Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2023
T24: percentage of rural population benefiting from new or improved services/infrastructures (ICT) (focus area 6C)		2014-2019					16.47
		2014-2018					
		2014-2017					
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					
Measure	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	291,369.66	66.69	238,879.22	54.68	436,906.60
M07	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	750,584.71	46.33	367,890.04	22.71	1,620,178.40
Total	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	1,041,954.37	50.65	606,769.26	29.50	2,057,085.00

## 1.c) Key information on RDP implementation based on data from a) and b) by Focus Area

### **Financial Overview**

Activity described within this report covers the period from the final quarter of 2015 (October - December 2015) when payments from the Programme commenced to 31 December 2019.

There were two modifications to the Programme approved during the reporting period. The second Programme amendment was approved on the 14 March 2019, which resulted in changes to the financial allocations and some indicator targets. The third Programme amendment approved on 11 December 2019, resulted in changes to some financial allocations. The financial allocations shown within this report are based on those agreed within the third Programme modification. The Welsh Government are proposing a fourth modification in 2020 following a review of delivery to date to manage closure of the programme and to ensure remaining resources are allocated where most needed, and to allow a smooth transition to future arrangements.

Payments of €132.2m were made for activity undertaken and claimed by the end of 2019, bringing the total paid since the start of the Programme to €425.4m. This represents 43.5% of the Programme allocation. Of the total cumulative expenditure to date €166.1m came from Pillar 1 transfer funding, of which €46.6m was paid during 2019.

The 2019 N+3 target for the Programme was met in March 2018 well in advance of December 2019 deadline.

By the end of 2019 total cumulative committed funds were €753.24m. The highest cumulative commitments by Priority were against P4 (€350.2m) and P6 (€181.24m) with €221.79m committed under the remaining three Priorities. By Measure the highest cumulative commitment was seen against Measure 10 (€210.79m), Measure 4 (€180.53m), Measure 1 (€88.17m), Measure 16 (€95.44m) and Measure 19 (€58.92) with €119.39m committed under the remaining Measures.

It should be noted that two payments were included in the Quarter 2 2018 SFC declaration to the Commission totalling €5.01m (of which €2.66m EAFRD), under Measure 20 (Technical Assistance). These payments were later removed from the final account figures via the Annual Account Difference document. This adjustment to the Technical Assistance payments has not been included within the Commission's 2019 Financial Implementation Report (FIR), hence a variance occurs between the Total Public/EAFRD expenditure on the FIR and that reported in the 2019 AIR.

### **Measure 20: Technical Assistance**

Activity funded by Technical Assistance (TA) is essential for the successful implementation of the Welsh Government Rural Communities Rural Development Programme 2014-20. Activities funded include technical input to the viability of projects, programme implementation and the development of IT systems. TA funds a number of mandatory elements of the RDP such as the Wales Rural Network (WRN) and monitoring and evaluation costs of the Programme. Technical Assistance also supports actions that support administrative capacity linked to the management of ESI funds. These actions include those associated with supporting the implementation of the programme.

Technical Assistance projects allow the Welsh Government (WG) to meet the regulatory requirements for the delivery of the Programme, activities funded include: Glastir Implementation, NRW Woodland Management Planning, Business Improvements, Managing Authority & Delivery Costs, Monitoring &

Evaluation, On the Spot Checks, Technical Appraisal, Analysis & Inspection and the WRN. The total cumulative committed value for Measure 20 by the end of 2019 was €36.2m. Payments of €6.2m were made during 2019 of which €3.3m EAFRD, providing a total cumulative spend of €16.9m of which €8.95m EAFRD by the end of 2019.

TA activities are delivered under Measure 20.1, with the WRN funded through Measure 20.2.

	<b>Number of applications</b>	<b>Total Value (£m)</b>	<b>Total Value (€m) *</b>
Total allocation for TA		£ 41.8	€ 48.7
Committed – Total Public	8	£ 30.8	€ 36.2
Total Spend		£ 14.8	€ 16.9

*\*Euro conversion of applications under appraisal and approved is based on a €1 = £0.85 planning exchange rate*

## **IMPLEMENTATION BY FOCUS AREA**

### **PRIORITY 1: FOCUS AREAS 1A, 1B, 1C**

Measures 1 (Knowledge Transfer & Information Actions), 2 (Advisory Services) & 16 (Co-operation) are programmed under Priority 1 Focus Area 1A, with Measure 16 also contributing to Focus Area 1B and Measure 1 to Focus Area 1C. In Wales, the Knowledge Transfer and Information actions, along with advisory services, farm management and farm relief services, are horizontal Measures relevant to all Priorities of the Programme with actions within the Measures programmed under specific Focus Areas of the other Priorities. Activity also contributes directly to meeting the cross cutting objectives of innovation, climate change and the environment.

A cumulative total of €36.86m expenditure was incurred in respect of Measure 1, €5.67m under Measure 2 and €23.32m under Measure 16 across the Programme during the reporting period. For committed expenditure a total of €88.17m in funding was committed under Measure 1, €8.43m committed under Measure 2 and €95.44m under Measure 16 during 2019.

Regarding achievement against Target Indicators under Priority 1 of the Programme a cumulative total of €65.85m expenditure (23.76% uptake against indicator T1) was recorded for Measures 1 (Knowledge Transfer), 2 (Advisory Services) & 16 (Cooperation), with 173 Cooperation operations supported through the whole of Measure 16 (36.19% uptake against indicator T2) and 14,406 participants recorded (41.50% uptake against indicator T3) by the end of 2019.

#### **Measure 1.1-1.3 Knowledge Transfer and Information Actions**

The Knowledge Transfer and Innovation (KT&I) Scheme supports the knowledge, training and information requirements of farming, forestry and food manufacturing SME businesses for the creation of a more sustainable and competitive rural economy. The WG has developed the **Farming Connect** Framework, which comprises an integrated pan Wales programme of knowledge transfer and innovation support. It is a centrally managed and publicly tendered programme, covering specific activities

focussing on lifelong learning & development, demonstration and information actions and support for short-term management exchanges in agriculture and forestry. Contracts under Measures 1 and 2, delivered through Farming Connect, are central in supporting the delivery of other areas of the Programme and form the main mechanism and structure for delivering a co-ordinated and integrated package of knowledge transfer, advice and innovation support services targeting rural communities. In addition to the centrally procured activity taking place, the KT&I Scheme also includes grant-aided projects for sectorial and industry led, bottom-up initiatives targeting agriculture, forestry, food, other rural SMEs and land managers.

The existing four year framework of Farming Connect came to an end in August 2019. Given the need to transition to different arrangements after the current programme the Knowledge Transfer & Innovation programme, (Farming Connect), has been extended for a further three years to August 2022. The programme is currently undergoing a refresh to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.

Key objectives:

- New Governance Structure - the three sub-groups have been replaced with one Delivery Board. The Strategic Advisory Board remains at the peak of the Governance structure.
- Simplify the programme – the programme was simplified with the end user in mind. It was felt that the right “pieces” are there but they needed to be re-aligned to meet the demands of the industry.
- Improve the communication of messages / topics – the refresh has introduced three new clear themes that all farmers can relate to – Business; Land; and Livestock. (see below for additional information on the Themes)
- Fit for purpose – Farming Connect needs to continue to react to the challenges and opportunities facing both our agricultural and forestry sectors as a consequence of Brexit and future policies.

The Themes: Three new themes (Business; Land; Livestock) form the basis of the “on the ground” delivery. All interventions, messages and packages of support (all bar Health & Safety) will fall under one of these themes.

The new Farming Connect website (<https://businesswales.gov.wales/farmingconnect/>) was made available in November 2019, having undergone a restructure to reflect the themes, with the view that it will help focus the customer’s journey through the programme with all farmers being able to relate to one or all of them.

Going forward, baselines for each of the themes will be promoted as best practice and will be a starting point for a participant’s journey through the programme, ensuring the Farming Connect support is based on need. Whilst not mandatory across the programme, acceptance to certain Workshops / Surgeries / Clinics will only be on the basis the need can be evidenced, based on one of the baselines identified under the three themes. The identified baselines are: Business- Business Plan/benchmarking, Land - Nutrient Management Plans and finally Livestock - Animal Health Plans. The baselines will not necessarily have to have been delivered by Farming Connect.

### **Measure 1.1**

Under Measure 1.1 (vocational training & skills acquisition) a cumulative total of €16.81m has been spent of which €9.22m was during 2019. During 2019 the two core delivery mechanisms within the Programme delivering Measure 1.1 activity were Farming Connect and Project HELIX.

**Project HELIX** provides funding support for research into global food production, trends and waste to help small to medium sized food manufacturers across Wales to increase production and reduce waste. Developed by Food Innovation Wales (FIW), a partnership of three food centres, Project HELIX supports food manufacturers in Innovation, Efficiency and Strategy. Further information on Project HELIX can be found under the Focus Area 3a section of this report.

**Farming Connect** has developed several vocational training initiatives under this Measure which deliver to multiple Focus Areas:

1. **One to one mentoring**

Designed to benefit new entrants, businesses considering a significant strategic change in direction and individuals looking to exit the industry and who are considering share/contract farming possibilities this initiative has been developed by Farming Connect to provide farmers and foresters with peer to peer mentoring. Up until 31 December 2019, 485 mentees have been assigned a mentor. The topics focussed on in 2019 included amongst others succession, health and safety, diversification and calf rearing.

2. **Agri Academy**

The Agri Academy brings together individuals making their way into the agricultural industry in Wales, giving them the inspiration, confidence, skills and contacts they need to become future rural leaders, professional business people and aspiring entrepreneurs. The programme which provides training, mentoring, support and guidance is split into three distinct programmes.

1. The Rural Leadership programme – aimed at inspiring and developing a new generation of leaders in rural Wales (a joint collaboration with the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society). A total of 12 individuals took part in this programme in 2019.
2. The Business and Innovation programme – aimed at supporting and inspiring the next generation of farming and forestry innovators and entrepreneurs in Wales. 12 individuals took part in this programme in 2019.
3. The Junior programme – aimed at supporting young people aged between 16 and 19 years who hope to follow a career in the food, farming and forestry industries (a joint collaboration with Wales Young Farmers' Clubs). 12 individuals benefited from this programme in 2019.

During 2019, the Agri Academy's Business & Innovation and Junior programmes inspired its members with study visits to the Netherlands and Iceland to look at novel ways of working, new business models and ways to inspire entrepreneurialism and foster leadership skills.

As part of Farming Connect Refresh the Rural Leadership Programme will end with the final intake in 2019. From 2020 onwards priority will be given to the Business and Innovation element, as this in the main attracts those that are involved in farming on a day to day basis, and aligns with the core principles of Farming Connect. The Junior Academy will also continue. Support for the "leaders of the future" will be provided through the Young People into Agriculture Forum.

### 3. **Skills**

Through the skills programme, individuals can access up to 80% funding for completing short accredited training courses on key topics. To access the training courses individuals must complete an online Personal Development Plan - this helps identify individual as well as business needs together with the training courses which could help them to become more efficient, skilled and profitable. It also helps identify a mechanism by which to strengthen or introduce new skills to the business. A total of 5,174 Personal Development Plans (PDP) had been completed up until the end of December 2019.

There have been a total of 4,123 instances of completed accredited training, covering 63 courses out of an approved list of 80 courses currently available. Examples of courses completed in the period include:

- Financial Recording & VAT – 215 individuals
- Cattle Foot Trimming – 197 individuals
- Rough Terrain Telescopic Lift Truck – 286 individuals
- Level 2 Safe Use of Pesticides (PA1) Safe Application of Pesticides (PA2) - 654 individuals

### 4. **E-learning**

Up until the end of December 2019 a total of 4,475 e-learning courses were accessed by individuals and completed. Examples of courses include:

- Business Planning - 64 individuals
- Farm Finance – 77 individuals
- Health and Safety. Compulsory for machinery or equipment courses – 3,076 individuals
- Grazing Management - 65 individuals
- Lambing the Basics – 59 individuals
- Farm Liver fluke management – 71 individuals

Existing courses on offer are currently being upgraded to improve content and user experience. Material for new courses is also being sourced across the themes of Business, Land and Livestock, with an emphasis on quality of content rather than quantity. The aim being to increase the number of courses completed and the number of individuals accessing E-learning.

### 5. **Storfa Sgiliau / Skills Store**

Farming Connect has developed a fully funded Continuous Professional Development recording system to capture all knowledge transfer and training activity undertaken by registered individuals during the current Farming Connect programme.

Storfa Sgiliau provides a one-stop on-line system for users, to track and store their records of learning and training certificates. Enabling them to build a comprehensive CV for use in applications for employment and Farm Assurance checks.

Potential partners, Supply Chains and stakeholders are currently being approached with a view to using the system to record non-Farming Connect activity to further enhance the user's CV and their CPD records. Usage of the Storfa Sgiliau system with such organisations will be covered within Memorandum Of Understandings (MOUs).

The recording system sits on the Business Wales (BOSS) website and is free to access and use by all individuals registered with the Farming Connect Programme.

Storfa Sgiliau enable users to have instant access to a downloadable or digital reports which sets out an individual's skills, training and relevant academic / professional achievements. It also provides evidence of training courses undertaken for the benefit of Farm Assurance Schemes and supply chain organisations including wholesalers, retailers etc.

An example of CV together with a CV template and guidance, is currently in development and will be made available online in the coming months.

## Measure 1.2

Under Measure 1.2 (demonstration activities and information actions) a cumulative total of €19.74m was spent by the end of 2019 of which €8.03 was spent during 2019. **Farming Connect** are the sole deliverer of demonstration activities under this Measure, activity during 2019 included:

1. The **Demonstration Network** - Up until 31 December 2019, the Farming Connect Demonstration Network has supported eight Innovation sites, 30 Demonstration farms and has recruited 155 Focus sites. The sites promote innovation and new technology that is available for farmers and foresters and provides a practical platform to demonstrate how this new technology/technique can be implemented at farm/forestry level. Up until 31 December 2019, 701 events have been hosted on the demonstration network with 9,481 attendees. An example of a project undertaken on the Demonstration network includes The Innovation site project which uses cervical AI in combination with frozen semen to fast-track genetic improvement in sheep flocks
2. **Discussion groups** are made up of approximately eight beneficiaries who meet regularly according to a structured programme with clear aims and outcomes identified from the outset. Between autumn 2015 and 31 December 2019, 143 groups were recruited with a total of 1,508 individual members representing 1,323 businesses. The groups are collecting data that is relevant to their needs, allowing them to make comparisons and learn about the benefits of recording information and using it inform management decisions.
3. **Agrisgôp (Action Learning)** is a fully-funded action learning programme which brings together forward-thinking, like-minded individuals from farm and forestry businesses at a local level. Working together in groups of 6-10, group members can learn new management skills, gain confidence, access specialist information and explore and develop viable futures for their businesses. Based on the concept of action learning, Agrisgôp provides the opportunity to progress skills and confidence, which will in turn assist the development of ideas and opportunities to move businesses forward. A total of 144 groups have been established across Wales facilitated by local Agrisgôp leaders. They hold meetings at regular intervals; during this period 979 meetings took place. An example of an Agrisgôp group that was established during



2019 is the Pendine Water Quality group, which looked at protecting the quality of water sourced from an important drinking water borehole thanks to small-scale changes to farming practices resulting from a Farming Connect-facilitated collaboration between farmers and Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water. The group included seven dairy farmers and a beef producer from an area of land which drains into the drinking water borehole. A series of on farm meetings, a visit to the local water treatment works and discussions led to identifying a number of solutions that would benefit both the farmers and the water environment.

4. **One to one surgeries** allow beneficiaries to receive bespoke advice on a variety of topics e.g. strategic business planning, succession planning, IT, planning, and marketing and diversification. Since the beginning of the programme there have been 718 clinics that have taken place with 3,276 beneficiaries, likewise some 749 surgeries have taken place with 3,624 beneficiaries.
5. **Diversification and awareness seminars** - These events aim to help farmers and foresters understand the essential elements of developing diversification ventures. Regional events were held to outline the key elements of planning a diversification project with attendees signposted to the additional support and advice available through the Farming Connect programme - 14 events were held with 907 beneficiaries.
6. **Venture** is an initiative designed to help match farmers and landowners who are looking to step back from the industry with new entrants looking for a way into farming. The initiative guides people on both sides through the key steps required to find a potential business partner. An integrated package of training, mentoring, specialist advice and business support available through existing Farming Connect interventions equips participants with the skills, knowledge and confidence needed to help them achieve their goals. Up until 31 December 2019, there are 384 active members and out of these 119 potential matches have been identified. The individuals who have found potential business partners are now applying for group advice through the advisory service for further support. There have been 31 new joint venture enterprises established since the start of the programme.

### Measure 1.3

Under Measure 1.3 (management exchanges and farm visits) a cumulative total of €0.31m was spent by the end of 2019, of which €0.15 was spent during 2019. **Farming Connect** is the sole deliverer of demonstration activities under this Measure, activity during 2019 included:

1. **Farm and Forest short term visits**; spending time visiting other businesses can be a valuable way to discover improved methods of working, to see best practice in action and bring home new ideas to innovate your enterprise. Groups are provided with funding to support a study visit within the UK for up to four days. A total of 27 groups have undertaken visits to a variety of destinations

including Scotland, Northern Ireland and Devon. Topics of interest have included improving fertility and performance in the dairy herd, diversification and poultry.

2. **Farm and Forest exchanges;** successful individuals undertake a visit to other farm or forestry situations within the EU to learn about new and improved ways of working in the farming or forestry sectors. They can also host a suitably trained and experienced farm or forest manager to visit their holding and learn about different approaches to business management. The aim is to broaden their knowledge, technical ability and management expertise to provide new development opportunities at both a personal and business level. A total of 36 individuals have completed their exchange visits and reports have been published on the Farming Connect website. The visit topics range from improved breeding techniques, Biomass CHP systems in Austria and Winter forage management and utilisation.

## Measure 2

Under Measure 2 (Advisory Services, farm management & farm relief services) a cumulative total of €5.67m was spent by the end of 2019 with €8.43m funds committed.

## Measures 2.1 & 2.2

**The Farming Connect Advisory Service** provides a range of subsidised, independent, confidential and bespoke advice to farm and forestry businesses. Available on a one-to-one basis the individual advice element is up to 80% funded and group advice is 100% funded up to a maximum of €1,500. The Advisory Service is delivered by eight companies, selected and approved by Farming Connect. The framework offers a range of advisers who have a wealth of experience and knowledge to deliver a high standard advice. Up until 31st December 2019, a total of 3,562 instances of 1:1 and Group advice have been completed and claimed. The following breakdown shows the categories of advice individual businesses have completed since the start of the programme:

- Business Planning – 1,016
- Business Planning – Forestry Management - 22
- Technical Grassland & Crop Management – 2,228
- Technical Livestock Management & Performance - 208
- Technical Diversification and Added Value – 80
- Technical Timber processing and added value – 1
- Technical Horticulture – 7

## Measure 2.1

Farming Connect has enabled effective working across measures to ensure complementarity and support delivery of multiple objectives. This is demonstrated through Measure 2.1, where **Glastir** has used advisory support to develop water management plans carried out and woodland plans continue to be verified against the UK Forestry Standard by Natural Resources Wales (NRW). It also requires use of the expertise of Wales' archaeological trusts to give Contract Managers advice on the most suitable

management for Glastir Advanced contracts. Further information on Glastir activity under Measure 2.1 can be found under Priority 4 and 5 sections of this report.

Total cumulative spend under Measure 2.1 by the end of 2019 was €5.63m with €0.34m under Measure 2.2.

### **Measure 2.3**

This Measure (support for training of advisors) was removed during the second Programme amendment approved in March 2019.

### **Measure 16.1**

In Wales, the **European Innovation Partnership (EIP)** was launched in January 2016 and applications are invited from Groups interested in solving common problems. In August 2017, Menter a Busnes were awarded the contract to run the EIP Wales programme which involves the management and facilitation of every stage from enquiry through to awarding project contracts and execution of the successful projects.

Groups are supported by the Farming Connect Knowledge Exchange Hub, a collaboration between Farming Connect and IBERS, Aberystwyth University. The Hub assists them by undertaking background literature searches into their proposed topic to gain a better understanding of what is already known about the topic and to inform the project of any gaps in the information that may need to be investigated. The Hub also provides support and guidance on project designs and will work with the Groups throughout the lifetime of the projects to assist with the project outcomes and dissemination. The Groups are also able to seek fully funded support from an Innovation Broker, who provides guidance and support to the Group throughout the application process. All full applications are assessed by a Review Panel consisting of technical experts from Menter a Busnes, The Knowledge Exchange Hub and the WG. There has been a total of 182 enquiries for new project ideas since January 2016. A total of 111 literature reviews have been undertaken by the Knowledge Exchange Hub to assist groups in understanding more about their topic and how to develop a project. Eight projects were approved in 2019, bringing the total to 27. A total of three groups have now completed their projects.

Total cumulative expenditure by the end of 2019 was €0.40m under Measure 16.1.

Between the 27 projects, there are 187 Operational Group members, which is made up of 143 farmer members, 6 SME, 5 NGOs, 8 research institutes, 23 advisors and 2 others. The projects that were approved in 2019 are titled as follows, and more detail can be found on the Farming Connect website (<https://businesswales.gov.wales/farmingconnect/business/european-innovation-partnership-eip-wales/approved-eip-wales-projects>):

1. Managing dairy ewes for better milk bacteriological profile
2. Sustainable intensification in upland grazing production systems
3. Introducing fat-tailed sheep to Wales to satisfy UK market demand
4. Improving the diagnosis and treatment of gastrointestinal round worms in cattle
5. Establishing Trees in Bracken
6. Milk sampling using Q Scout MLD to enable a more scientific and robust approach to selective dry cow management decision making
7. Developing a novel way of rapidly measuring agronomic treatment effects on grass growth
8. Using 'Internet of Things' technology to improve slurry management on farms

In addition to these there are a number of groups in the application process making regular contact with the EIP Wales team to progress to submission of a full application.

1. In Wales, EIP is embedded within the overarching Farming Connect Framework. Support is available to develop project proposals through the Knowledge Exchange Hub, and the use of Innovation Brokers. Projects supported through EIP will be communicated to the industry through various Farming Connect initiatives.
2. Both the Industry developed and EIP established groups will be required to integrate effectively with the strategic knowledge transfer element to ensure the delivery of a single comprehensive Farming Connect programme under the RDP 2014-2020.
3. **Reporting on Project milestones** – activities to demonstrate the outcomes of the collaborative actions, by monitoring the impacts, ensuring a baseline assessment is in place before action is taken and measuring the subsequent changes. Activities related to the development of key lessons and recorded experiences of the participants that have been engaged in the collaboration to help to shape future programmes and projects.

EIP strives to strengthen the links between agriculture and forestry and research and innovation

## **PRIORITY 2: FOCUS AREA 2A**

Measures 1, 2, 4.1 and 16.1 are programmed under Priority 2. Please see Priority 1 section above for information on Measures 1 (Knowledge Transfer) and 2 (Advisory Services) Farming Connect delivery and also Measure 16.1 (EIP) during the reporting period. Focus Area 2b has not been programmed in Wales.

Under Priority 2 a cumulative total of €42.12m expenditure has been incurred, of which €17.60m was for activity undertaken during 2019. This included €18.33m under Measure 1, €3.08m under Measure 2, €20.63m under Measure 4 and €0.08m under Measure 16 during the reporting period. Regarding committed expenditure a cumulative total of €56.34m in funding was committed under Priority 2 by the end of 2019.

Regarding achievement against Target Indicators under Priority 2 of the Programme the percentage of agri holdings receiving support in investments for restructuring or modernisation (indicator T4) was 6.35% (1532 absolute value) by the end of 2019 against a baseline value of 24,120 agricultural holdings in Wales.

Progress in implementing Measure 4.1 (support for investments in agricultural holdings) has been provided below;

### **Measure 4.1**

**The Sustainable Production Grant (SPG)** scheme under Measure 4.1 primarily delivers under Focus Area 2a in addition to Focus Areas 5b and 5d. The Scheme provides support to help farmers improve the economic and environmental performance of their agricultural holding in line with the WG's and agriculture industry in Wales' vision for more sustainable, profitable and resilient farm businesses. It provides capital investment in facilities and equipment that relate to animal health and welfare, crop storage, production housing and handling, renewable energy production and soil and crop management. Grants represent a maximum 40% contribution and, for the first three rounds of the scheme, ranged from

a minimum of €18.82k to a maximum of €470.59k to increase on-farm investment, production and resource efficiencies to improve technical performance.

To date there have been six Expression of Interest (EOI) windows opened for the SPG scheme, resulting in 82 full applications invited and received and 72 approvals in rounds 1-3. Total payments of €20.63m have been made during this period under Focus Area 2a.

The WG's intention, throughout the delivery of the SPG, is to continually review the performance of the scheme and to evaluate the criteria applied in each of the calls to ensure they are relevant to the industry and individual businesses, as well as the WG's strategic priorities. On-farm pollution, affecting water quality and wildlife, is often due to poor slurry storage and dirty water handling facilities.

More recent rounds (EOI windows 4 through to 6) of the SPG Scheme have focused on supporting farmers to deliver on the WG's objectives of enhanced nutrient management and safeguarding and improving water, soil and air quality by reducing agricultural pollution. Financial support for capital items which contribute to these objectives is being made available through the SPG, with contributions of up to 40%, with a grant range of £12k to £50k (for projects from £30k to £125k+). This proposal was included within the second programme amendment approved during 2019.

To date, after three rounds of the SPG nutrient management, 889 EOIs have been received, with 501 beneficiaries accepting selection to progress to a full application. Appraisal of the eligibility of projects under Focus Areas 2a, 5b and 5d within the full applications submitted is ongoing. At the end of 2019, a total of 61 beneficiaries accepted a contract with an approved value of €2.04m (£1.73m). No payments have been made in 2019, as contract holders have up to two years to complete their projects and submit their claims. The level of interest in each SPG round to date has demonstrated farmers are willing to invest in their farm businesses to become more sustainable, prosperous and resilient and it is envisaged a smaller grant range will enable a greater participation in the SPG.

**The Farm Business Grant (FBG)** also programmed under Measure 4.1 aims to help farmers in Wales to improve the economic and environmental performance of their agricultural holdings. The grant provides a financial contribution towards standard costed capital investments in equipment and machinery, which have been pre-identified as offering clear and quantifiable benefits to farm enterprises. The minimum grant available is €3,529k (£3,000k) and the maximum is €14,118k (£12,000k). To be eligible to apply to the FBG, a member of the farming business must have attended a Farming Connect Farming for the Future event. To date, after six rounds of the FBG, over 3,860 applications have been received, with 3,610 approved applications under Focus Area 2a.

Please also see Priority 5 section of this report for further information on Measure 4.1 delivery.

### **Measure 4.3**

**Measure 4.3** was to be delivered through the 'Farm and Forestry Infrastructure Scheme, but this scheme was never launched, and had no activity or spend throughout 2019. The WG will continue to review this measure in preparation for the 4th modification.

## **PRIORITY 3: FOCUS AREA 3A**

Measures 1, 2, 4.2 and 16 are programmed under Priority 3. Please see Priority 1 section above for information on Measures 1 (Knowledge Transfer) and 2 (Advisory Services) Farming Connect delivery and also Measure 16.1 (EIP) during the reporting period. Focus Area 3b has not been activated as part of the Wales Programme.

Under Priority 3 a cumulative total of €46.29m expenditure was incurred of which €15.22m during 2019. Of the cumulative spend €13.39m was under Measure 1, €0.32m under Measure 2, €29.83m under Measure 4 and €2.76m under Measure 16. Regarding committed expenditure a cumulative total of €53.17m in funding was committed under Measure 1, with €0.4m under Measure 2, €46.73m under Measure 4 and €3.68m under Measure 16.

Regarding achievement against Target Indicators under Priority 3 of the Programme the percentage of agricultural holdings supported under quality schemes, local markets and short supply circuits, and producer groups/organisations (indicator T6) was 0.42% (102 absolute value) by the end of 2019 against a baseline value of 24,120 agricultural holdings in Wales.

Progress against Measure 1.1 (support for vocational training and skills), Measure 4.2 (investments in processing / marketing / development of agri products) and Measure 16.4 (Supply chain) has been provided below;

### Measure 1.1

**Project HELIX** is designed to develop Welsh businesses to enable them to attend UK and International Food and Drink related trade exhibitions and trade development visits, which are key components for increasing growth and improving the competitiveness of companies in Wales.

The Pan Wales partnership developed by the three food centres has, at its core, the development of rural and valleys communities and the creation of sustainable jobs to impact on poverty throughout Wales. Recent work undertaken by the centres has identified growth in the sector which tends to originate in areas where unemployment is highest, i.e. rural communities and the South Wales valleys. Due to Wales' geographical location the strategy for a sustainable food sector must focus on the development of start-up companies and support to SMEs. Historically the sale of larger companies to food multi nationals will, in the majority of cases, create a re-alignment of production capacity - this results in the manufacturing site often being incorporated into other processing facilities elsewhere in the UK and internationally. Innovation and food company regeneration is therefore the key to a vibrant, effective and longstanding Welsh food and drink sector.

The project has been developed into three key areas and will be delivered Pan Wales under the Food Innovation Wales brand; Food Innovation, Food Efficiency and Food Strategy. The project was launched in March 2017, and to end of 2019 the grants paid equal €7.01m (£5.96m) of a total expected expenditure of €25.72 (£21.86m). Core outputs and expected achievements during its lifetime include:

Food Centre	Project value (Millions)	€ Impact in (Millions)	No.of Enterprises assisted	New jobs created	New markets accessed
FIC		€91.7m	94	200	48
FTC		€49.4m	56	105	23
FCW		€35.2m	31	65	16

Total	€25.72	€176.5m	181	370	87
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Project Helix activity to 31 December 2019:

	Actual	Target
• Number of actions supported:	18	18
• Number of training days given:	444	255
• Number of participants in training:	579	445
• Number of Enterprises Assisted:	336	181
• Number of Jobs (FTE) Created:	338.51	370
• Number of new products supported:	478	423
• Indicative impact in €M/£M:	€130.3m	€133.18m
• Jobs Safeguarded:	1,404	2,041
• Start-up companies supported:	215	

In addition to Project HELIX the following Strategic Projects are programmed under Measure 1.1 delivering to Focus Area 3a;

**Cywain (Menter a Business)** delivered under Measure 1.1 is a five year strategic project offering seamless provision for food-oriented food and drink businesses, bringing together the successes of previous Cywain projects and the Fine Food and Drink Cluster. The project aims to support:

- Start up (businesses under two years of age) and micro businesses that are scaling up.
- SME's will be account managed and offered targeted interventions
- Businesses of all sizes who want to cluster together or establish a special interest group to address specific business issues affecting sector growth.

To the end of 2019 the project has supported 543 participants in training with 579 training days received. In the same period the €3.22m (£2.74m) of grant has been paid out of a total commitment of €15.62 (£13.28m).

**Food skills Cymru** is a project that aims to develop skills within food businesses as a key component of the supply chain in serving and selling Welsh Food. Skills Diagnostics with businesses started in April 2019 and were a requirement for businesses who wanted to access the funding. By the end of December 2019 a total of 86 businesses had completed the skills diagnostic. The first funding application was submitted in June 2019 and up until the end of 2019 there had been a total of 108 funding applications processed and approved, with a total of 1,261 employees approved to complete training and just under €0.2m (£0.17m) of funding approved for businesses.

A workstream within Food Skills Cymru is **Wales: A Food Destination (Lantra)**, which is a collaborative project bringing together key stakeholders, commercial food and tourism businesses to develop and pilot sustainable supply chain solutions for businesses serving and selling Welsh

food. Investment will be made in strengthening the supply chain, improving links and promoting Wales as a food destination. During 2019 Food Skills Cymru and Wales: A food destination achieved:

144 Participants Supports

136 Enterprises Assisted

20 actions/operations supported

204.5 Training Days

115 participants in Training

**Tyfu Cymru (Lantra)** is a collaborative project which will bring key stakeholders and commercial horticultural businesses together to support and stimulate environmental and economic horticultural productivity in Wales. To the end of 2019 €0.46m (£0.39m) of grant has been paid against a total expected expenditure of €3.62 (£3.08m). Achievements up to the end of 2019 include;

244 participants supported

91 enterprises assisted

10 networks established

**Tyfu'r Dyfodol - Growing the Future** (National Botanic Gardens of Wales) aims to encourage people within Wales to grow more food. To the end of 2019 €0.76m (£0.65m) of grant has been paid against a total expected expenditure of €2.71m (£2.3m). Achievements to date include;

6,960 participants in training

3,511 training days given

7 jobs created

By the end of 2019 a cumulative total of €12.38m expenditure was incurred across Measure 1.1 under this Focus Area.

#### **Measure 4.2**

Measure 4.2 is delivered under Focus Area 3a of the Programme, through the **Food Business Investment Scheme (FBIS)**. It is designed to help primary producers of agricultural products in Wales to add value to their outputs by providing support to those businesses that do first and/or second stage processing activities. It is also designed to improve the performance and competitiveness of their businesses; to respond to consumer demand; to encourage diversification and to identify, exploit and service new emerging and existing markets.

Activity during this reporting period included: five applications approved under the fifth EOI window with a total grant awarded of €1.76m (£1.5m). The sixth EOI window invited eight projects to submit full applications and the seventh EOI window invited 10 projects to submit full applications during this



period. The eighth EOI window opened on 17 September 2019 and closed on 28 November 2019 with 10 projects invited to submit full applications. To date the FBIS has achieved:

Number of Operations Supported – 88

Number of new products – 304

Number of jobs created – 979.5

Number of jobs safeguarded – 791.5

Number of new markets accessed – 273

It is anticipated (pending budget approval) that a further window will open during 2020. By the end of December 2019 a cumulative total of €29.83m in expenditure has been incurred through the FBIS, of which €6.28m was during 2019.

#### **Measure 16.4**

The **Co-operation and Supply Chain Development Scheme (C&SCDS)** delivered under Measure 16 provides a broad range of support. The scheme aims to support the development of new products, practices, processes and technologies in the agriculture, forestry and food and hospitality sectors (except for fisheries or aquaculture products), and other actors that contribute to achieving the objectives and priorities of rural development policy including:

- small businesses working together to share production facilities and resources.
- short supply chains and local markets including promotion activities in a local context.
- pilot projects where the information is made publicly available and widely disseminated.

The scheme supports collaboration and is designed to make new things happen, achieving transformational change. By the end of December 2019 a cumulative total of €2.72m was spent under Measure 16.4, with four operations supported. The number of holdings participating in supported schemes under measure 16.4 was 102, and the number of co-operation operations supported (other than EIP) for this measure was 6.00.

#### **PRIORITY 4: FOCUS AREAS 4a, 4b, 4c**

Measures 1, 2, 4.4, 8, 10, 11 and 16 are programmed under Priority 4. Please see Priority 1 section above for information on Measures 1 (Knowledge Transfer) and 2 (Advisory Services) Farming Connect delivery and also Measure 16.1 (EIP) during the reporting period.

Under Priority 4 a cumulative total of €236.73m was incurred by the end of 2019. Regarding committed expenditure during 2019 a cumulative total of €6.41m in funding was committed under Measure 1, €2.44m for Measure 2, €82.44m for Measure 4, €9.54m for Measure 8, €200.92m under Measure 10, with €24.62m under Measure 11 and €18.83m under Measure 16.

Regarding achievement against Target Indicators under Priority 4 of the Programme by the end of 2019 the percentage realised against 'forest / other woodland area under management contracts supporting biodiversity' (indicator T8) was 0.83% (2,568 absolute value) against a baseline value of 311,050 ha for

forest and other woodlanded land (FOWL) in Wales. Achievement for Indicator T9 ‘percentage of agri land under management contracts supporting biodiversity and / or landscapes’ was 191.18% (2,722,243.00 absolute value) against a baseline of 1,423,910 of Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA) in Wales. Achievement for T10 ‘percentage of agri land under management contracts to improve water management’ was 16.80% (239,179.00 absolute value) against a baseline of 1,423,910 UAA in Wales. For Indicator T12 ‘percentage of agri land under management contracts to improve soil management and / or prevent soil erosion’ was 13.81% (196,586.00 absolute value) against a baseline of 1,423,910 UAA in Wales by the end of 2019.

Measures programmed under specific Focus Areas under Priority 4 include;

- Focus Area 4A (agriculture): Measure 8.1 (afforestation / creation of woodland), 8.2 (establishment and maintenance of agro-forestry systems) and 10.1 (Agri-environment-Climate)
- Focus Area 4A (forestry): Measure 8.5 (investments improving resilience and environmental value of forest ecosystems)
- Focus Area 4B (agriculture): Measure 8.1 (afforestation / creation of woodland), 8.2 (establishment and maintenance of agro-forestry systems) and 10.1 (Agri-environment-Climate)
- Focus Area 4B (forestry): activity against this Focus Area was removed as part of the second programme amendment
- Focus Area 4C (agriculture): Measure 8.1 (afforestation / creation of woodland), 8.2 (establishment and maintenance of agro-forestry systems), 11.1 (convert to organic farming practices and methods) and 11.2 (maintain organic farming practices and methods)
- Focus Area 4C (forestry): activity against this Focus Area was removed as part of the second programme amendment

## **Glastir**

Woodland creation and agro-forestry, woodland restoration and management, agri-environment and organic support provided under Measures 2.1, 8.1, 8.2, 8.4 & 8.5, 4.4, 10.1 and 11.1 & 11.2, is delivered through the WG’s sustainable land management scheme, Glastir, through the following:

- Glastir Entry, Advanced and Small Grants (Measures 4.4 & 10.1) - Focus Areas 4A, 4B, 5D and 5E.
- Glastir Commons (Measure 10.1) - Focus Area 4A.
- Glastir Organic (Measure 11) - Focus Area 4C.
- Glastir Woodland Creation (Measures 8.1 & 8.2) - Focus Areas 4A, 4B, and 5E.
- Glastir Woodland Management (legacy), Forest Management Plans and Restoration - Focus Areas 4A, 5C, 5E and 6A.
- Glastir advisory support (Measure 2.1) – Focus Area 4A, 4B, 4C, 5D and 5E.

Progress against Measure 1.1 (Vocational training), Measure 2.1 (support to help benefiting from the use of advisory services), Measure 4.4 (non productive investments linked to agri-environment-climate objectives), Measure 8 (Investments in forest area development), Measure 10.1 (Agri-environment-climate), Measure 11 (Organic Farming), Measure 16.5 (joint action to mitigating or adapting to climate change and for joint approaches to environmental projects and ongoing environmental practices) along with Measure 16.8 (forest management plans) has been provided below;

## **Measure 1.1**

**Forest Focus First** under Measure 1.1 aims to deliver transformational change to the timber sector through a professional skilled workforce by;

- Business Planning – training plans and access to further business management courses; Skills Development – funded training to raise the skills of the sector; Professional Pathways – enable and promote higher level qualifications
- Knowledge Transfer - raise background knowledge and understanding in the workforce; Mentoring – provide a framework to access mentoring within the sector; Innovative Training Solutions – develop and publish old or new resources to maintain access to traditional skills and underpin new techniques and technology

Achievements by the end of 2019 included; 934 participants in training, 4,090 training days received and four jobs created under Forest Focus First.

By the end of 2019 a cumulative total of €0.93m was spent in total under Priority 4 through Measure 1.1.

### **Measure 2.1**

In addition under Measure 2.1 **Glastir** uses advisory support to have water management plans carried out and woodland plans verified against the UK Forestry Standard by Natural Resources Wales;

Through Measure 2 funding, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) on behalf of the WG are providing a Verification Service of the Glastir Forest Management Plans submitted to the WG by its own group of Glastir Registered Woodland Planners. During the reporting period NRW's verification project has supported the:

- Recruitment of five FTE dedicated to the Glastir Woodlands verification project.
- Writing and supporting Farming Connect, WG and Forest Management Planners with forestry training and associated documents.
- Evaluation and reporting on progress for Woodland Strategy indicators.
- Drawing up verification monitoring documents e.g. verification checklist, value for money (VFM) document.
- Verification of 371 Glastir Woodland Creation (GWC) applications (GWC rounds 1 to 6 inclusive) that comply with past and the very latest edition of The United Kingdom Forestry Standard (UKFS) dated July 2017.
- Supporting the creation of over 1,780 hectares (ha) of new woodland creation in Wales since the project start date.
- 28 GWC7 applications currently going through the verification process (137ha) and up to 78 GWC8 applications expected to be submitted for verification in the next few months (Deadline 5 October 2020).
- Verification of 57 Glastir Woodland Restoration (GWR) schemes on Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) sites across rounds 5 and 6 of the scheme, that again comply with UKFS and felling licence terms and conditions. Restoration of 335 hectares of woodland which have remnant ancient woodland features.
- Up to 45 GWR7 applications to be verified over the next months (Deadline 5 October 2020), which would result in at least 63 hectares of PAWS restoration.

- Supporting liaison with external stakeholders for scheme consultation e.g. RSPB, CADW, and programme promotion e.g. CONFOR, ICF, Woodland Trust, Coed Cymru and Llais y Goedwig.

To note the figures above are based on schemes verified and issued a contract (not necessarily planted).

In addition through Measure 20.1 Technical Assistance (TA) funding, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) on behalf of the WG are providing the management and oversight required for the Verification Service of Glastir Forest Management Plans submitted to the WG by its own group of Glastir Registered Woodland Planners.

In addition, Glastir requires the expertise of Wales' archaeological trusts to give advice on the suitable design for Glastir Woodland Creation projects, through the provision of archaeological advice for applications received and assessment of applications to ensure activities included in a Glastir contract do not damage or have an adverse impact on the historic environment. This also included a provision for general advice to be provided for Glastir Entry, Glastir Commons and Glastir Woodland Management in previous years.

By the end of December 2019 a cumulative total of €1.11m was spent through Measure 2.1 under Priority 4, with 355 actions supported and 678 beneficiaries advised.

#### **Measure 4.4**

Investments that contribute toward Focus Area 4a and 4b objectives are provided through capital works in Glastir Advanced and Glastir Small Grants under Measure 4.4. In **Glastir Advanced**, the capital works are assigned the Focus Area that they deliver against. For example, a fence protecting a Glastir Advanced hay meadow commitment in Measure 10.1 will be assigned Focus Area 4a as the hay meadow commitment is Focus Area 4a, a fence protecting a streamside corridor commitment in Glastir Advanced would be assigned Focus Area 4b as the streamside corridor is Focus Area 4b.

For **Glastir Small Grants (GSG)**, the Focus Area is assigned according to the theme for the individual round of Glastir Small Grants. The Carbon theme is assigned to Focus Area 5e, the Water theme against Focus Area 4b and, the Landscape and Pollinators theme to Focus Area 4a. There have been six EOI rounds of GSG to date.

By the end of 2019 there were 9,938 contracts for Glastir Capital Works (CW) operations under Measure 4.4 with €43.27m cumulative expenditure incurred. It should be noted a breakdown of these figures for NCA, age and agricultural branch in Table C of the monitoring tables has been provided, however figures shown in table C2.1 are lower than those in table B, this will be corrected in future reports once relevant data has been fully captured. Operations support by farm size has been provided within the supporting monitoring tables.

#### **Measure 8.1 and 8.2**

**Glastir Woodland Creation (GWC)** contracts are delivered under Measure 8.1 (support for afforestation/creation of woodland) and 8.2 (support for establishment and maintenance of agro-forestry systems) and includes Glastir Woodland Creation Maintenance and Premium. A total of eight EOIs have been opened to date.

GWC is programmed Priority 4, Focus Area 4a and 5e, with the majority of funding allocated to Priority 4. GWC has established 6,572 ha of new woodland creation, 6,172ha under Priority 4 and 400ha under 5e against a target of 3,300 ha. Cumulative expenditure by the end of 2019 was €9.33m, with €5.42m under P4 and €3.92m under Focus Area 5e. A total of 275 beneficiaries have been supported since the start of the programme, 77 of which during 2019.

### **Measure 8.3**

The **Forest Monitoring & Risk Management Scheme** is delivered under Measure 8.3 (prevention of damage to forests) by Natural Resources Wales (NRW). The objective of the Scheme is to support monitoring, mitigation and prevention of harmful results from current tree or woodland environment pest or disease outbreaks. The majority of the scheme's funding (75%) is linked to Focus Area 5e with the remaining funds programmed under Priority 4.

The application from NRW was approved in December 2018. Two claims have been received in 2019 and were paid in early 2020 but no expenditure was incurred through the Programme during the reporting period for this Measure under Priority 4. Further information on Measure 8.3 can be found under Priority 5 section below.

### **Measure 8.5 and 10.1**

The **Glastir Woodland Management (GWM)** scheme includes only legacy contracts from the previous 2007-2013 Programme and is paid through Measure 8.5 (support for investments improving resilience and environmental value of forest eco-systems) for capital payments and Measure 10.1 (agri-environment climate) for multi-annual, area based payments. At the end of the reporting year there were 101 contracts remaining with an area of 2,862 ha supported under P4. Cumulative expenditure from current plan is €4.56m.

**Glastir Woodland Creation** uses this measure to pay contract holders a €941.18 (£800.00) contribution towards Registered Glastir Woodland Planner's fees to develop a verified woodland creation plan. It is not reasonably possible to disaggregate payments for plans that supported focus area 4a and 5e elements in them. To date, €0.3m have been paid for plans, €0.03m in 2019.

### **Measures 10 & 11**

Measures 10 and 11 are now closed to new contracts. It is the intention to extend Glastir Advanced contracts, including underlying Glastir Entry elements where they are in place, all current Glastir Commons agreements and all current Glastir Organics contracts to 31 December 2021, to aid the transition between current schemes and the new land management schemes post Brexit. This approach will help maintain environmental outcomes during the interim period and ensure continued support for organic farmers. It will assist the industry in facing the upcoming challenges of Brexit alongside the immediate and ongoing problems associated with agriculture pollution. Importantly as well, the extensions will help farmers transition to future Land Management Programmes.

### **Measures 10**

**Glastir Entry** has achieved a total of 4,603 contracts, amounting to a total area of 543,496 ha. No further Entry contract offers will be made as the WG considers that more targeted interventions, such as those in Glastir Advanced and Glastir Small Grants are more appropriate to achieve its objectives. Under Glastir Entry, the total expenditure incurred by end 2019 was €62.82m of which the majority was paid from Priority 4 (€56.63m).

**Glastir Advanced** now comprises 2,529 contracts of which 911 are stand-alone contracts with 1,618 contracts underpinned by Glastir Entry and a further 74 contracts in Glastir Commons. Expenditure under this RDP has been €32.87m for Measure 4.4 and €48.15m for Measure 10.1. The EOI for Glastir Advanced 2019 opened on 18 September 2017 and closed on 20 October 2017. A total of 360 EOIs were submitted and 121 were selected for Contract Manager visits during 2018, resulting in 78 Glastir Advanced 2019 contracts. The WG has offered 697 contract renewals to eligible Glastir Advanced beneficiaries to 31 December 2019.

Although no new rounds are planned for Glastir Advanced, to ensure Measure 10 can continue to be successfully implemented during the remaining years of the Programme, new short terms contracts are being used to extend existing contracts. There were 776 Advanced Extended Renewals offered to eligible Glastir Advanced beneficiaries to 31 December 2020 and 462 advanced renewals to 31 December 2021.

**Glastir Commons** is programmed entirely under Priority 4, Focus Area 4a, and is closed to new entrants. Glastir Commons consists of 193 contracts covering 119,454 ha of land. All eligible contracts will be offered an extension to 2020 to allow time for Grazing Associations to explore other funding mechanisms, such as the Sustainable Management Scheme (Measure 16.5) or Payment for Ecosystem Services prospectuses. There were 136 Commons extensions and 57 Commons Renewals for 2020/21. During 2019, a total of €6.28m was paid out under the Glastir Commons scheme.

## **Measures 11**

The **Glastir Organics Scheme** under Measure 11 supports farmers to convert to (Measure 11.1) or maintain (Measure 11.2) organic farming practices. There have been three windows for this Scheme under the 2014-2020 RDP. Although this Scheme is now closed and no further windows are planned during this Programme, annual extensions are being offered to existing contract holders. During 2019, the WG offered 488 contract extensions to eligible Glastir Organic beneficiaries to 31 December 2020, with 462 beneficiaries accepting this extension offer.

There were 557 active contracts in place at the end of 2019 covering a total area of 67,058ha all under Measure 11.2. Expenditure of €4.16m was achieved during 2019 bringing cumulative expenditure to date under Measure 11 to €18.40m, the majority of which was for maintenance under Measure 11.2 (€15.36m).

## **Measure 15.1**

This Measure (payment for forest-environmental and climate commitments) was removed as part of the second Programme amendment approved in March 2019.

## **Measure 16.5**

The **Sustainable Management Scheme (SMS)** is delivered under Measure 16.5. This scheme supports direct action across Wales delivering against the approach and principles laid down in the Environment

(Wales) Act 2016. The SMS is designed to support the delivery of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 that will enable Wales' resources to be managed in a more proactive, sustainable and joined-up way to create eco-system resilience and to realise the benefits of ecosystem services. The SMS has a focus on landscape-scale, collaborative action delivering economic and social benefits to our rural communities through the sustainable management of our natural resources. It encourages projects to consider the natural resources priorities for action outlines in the Natural Resources Policy as well as the local level opportunities and challenges to deliver lasting social and economic benefits to rural communities supporting and delivering for the future generations act.

SMS supports a collaborative approach rather than single applicants to develop proposals for projects with a three year planned delivery of collaborative actions. These projects must contribute to the longer term ability of the landscape to support continuing social, economic and environmental benefits. Innovative approaches are being explored from diversification of business, multiple usage of the land through to Payment for Ecosystem Services mechanisms.

The selection criteria, scheme guidance and EOI guidance/application, were all devised subject to and including consideration of Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR) principles; social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas, creation of new small enterprise and job creation. The projects approved by the scheme are required to deliver actions that enhance and improve the resilience of ecosystems and the benefits & services they provide to the rural communities linked to them. The projects are also required to deliver mitigation or adaptations to climate change. To allow WG to provide significant guidance to applicants in developing the full application. By the end of programme it is estimated that 60 cooperation operations will be supported. The lead time to establish collaborations and develop projects on a scale capable of delivering against the focus areas within this sub-measure is considerable.

This scheme has committed €27.05m (£23m) of WG and EU funding to date through five EOI windows opened during 2016 - 2019. Thirty projects are currently under way with a further 13 projects in appraisal and a further eight currently developing full applications. To the end of the reporting period five EOI windows have opened for SMS:

- The first window received 63 EOIs of which 11 EOIs were successful and submitted full applications.
- The second window received 38 EOIs, of which 13 EOIs were successful and submitted full applications.
- The third window received 26 EOIs, of which 11 EOIs were successful and 10 have submitted full applications.
- The fourth window received 54 EOI's of which 9 were successful and have been invited to submit full applications.
- The fifth window received 45 EOI's of which 8 were successful and have been invited to submit full applications.

Several projects from the EOI windows are farmer led collaborations, and all significantly involve collaboration with the rural community of land owners, farmers, graziers, commoners and the local

communities themselves. There were 30 fully approved projects underway by the end of 2019. A cumulative total of €3.32m in expenditure under Measure 16.5 was paid by the end of December 2019.

Projects select indicators that they can monitor and achieve outputs and outcomes relevant to their activities, below shows some of the 30 active projects progress:

- Area of peatland habitat re-wetted; target 104ha – achieved – 14ha
- Area of woodland supported; target 4,513ha - achieved – 156ha
- Enterprises assisted; target 291 – achieved 68
- Managed access to countryside or coast; target 106km – achieved – 91.5km
- Number of actions to utilise natural resources for health benefit; target 891 – achieved 460
- Number of feasibility studies; target 25 – achieved 14
- Number of individuals gaining a qualification; target 128 – achieved 20
- Number of jobs created; target 25 – achieved 25
- Number of jobs safeguarded; target 14 - achieved 14
- Number of micro small and medium sized enterprises supported; target 497 – achieved 300
- Number of networks established; target 51 – achieved 22
- Number of participants in training; target 1,323 – achieved 1,252
- Number of pilot activities undertaken / supported; target 257 – achieved 32
- Number of stakeholders engaged; target 4,889 – achieved 1634
- Number of training days; target 547 – achieved 163

### **Measure 16.8**

Measure 16.8 is delivered through the **Co-operative Forestry Planning Scheme (CFPS)**. The CFPS provides financial support for a range of activities to encourage planning for the creation of broadleaved and conifer woodland to improve the management of natural resources and contribute to the well-being of rural communities within Wales. Eligible activities under this Measure could include the development and co-ordination of collaborative groups, communication and dissemination activities, technical and feasibility studies or monitoring and evaluation activities.

The second EOI window for this Scheme closed in April 2018 with two EOIs invited to submit full applications. The deadline for submission was July 2019. Changes to the selection criteria were made prior to the second EOI window, in order to allow applications for projects that will help deliver the objectives of the WG's Environmental and Rural Affairs Monitoring and Modelling Programme (ERAMMP).



To date, €0.01m has been paid in 3 installments to one project. The CFPS also delivers to Focus Areas 5c, 5e and 6a within the report.

## **PRIORITY 5**

Measures 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 10 and 16 are programmed under Priority 5. Focus Area 5A has not been activated as part of the Wales Programme.

Please see Priority 1 section above for information on Farming Connect delivery of Measures 1 (Knowledge Transfer) and 2 (Advisory Services) and also Measure 16.1 (EIP) during the reporting period. Also see Priority 3 and Priority 6 sections for information on Measure 16 (Co-operation), Priority 2 for Measure 4.1 activity, Priority 4 for Measures 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5 and 10.1 delivery also Priority 6 for Measure 7 (Basic Services and village renewal).

During 2019 expenditure incurred against Priority 5 totalled €10.73m bring total cumulative expenditure under P5 to €30.80m. The highest cumulative spend was under Measure 4 (€12.80m), Measure 8 (€7.66m) and Measure 10 (€7.24m) by the end of 2019. Regarding committed expenditure a cumulative total of €21.34m in funding was committed by the end of 2019 under Measure 4, €0.44m for Measure 7, €8.13m under Measure 8, with €9.87m under Measure 10, and €1.43m under Measure 16. Bringing total committed funds under Priority 5 to €45.02m.

Regarding achievement against Target Indicators under Priority 5 of the Programme for Indicator T15 'total investment for energy efficiency' a cumulative total of €14.51m was achieved against a target of €20.63m by the end of 2019. For Indicator T18 'percentage of agri land under management contracts targeting reduction of GHG and / or ammonia emissions' achievement was 15.07% (214,618.00 absolute value) against a baseline of 1,423,910 UAA in Wales by the end of 2019. For Indicator T19 'percentage of agri and forest land under management contracts contributing to carbon sequestration and conservation' achievement by the end of 2019 was 0.43% (7,449.00 absolute value) against a baseline of 1,734,960 total agri and forest land area in Wales.

Specific Measures programmed under Priority 5 include;

- Focus Area 5B: Measure 4.1 (investments in agricultural holdings) – *see Priority 2 section above for Measure 4.1,*
- Focus Area 5C: Measures 7.2 (investments of small scale infrastructure including renewable energy), 8.5 (improving resilience and environmental value of forest ecosystems), and 8.6 (investments for forest technologies), 16.6 and 16.8 (Support for drawing up of forest management plans or equivalent instruments)–*see Priority 4 section above for Measure 8.5 and 16.8*
- Focus Area 5D: Measures 4.1, 4.4 (non-productive investments linked to agri-environment-climate objectives), 10.1 (agri-environment-climate) – *See Priority 2 section for Measure 4.1, Priority 4 for Measure 4.4 and 10.1.*
- Focus Area 5E: Measures 4.4, 8.1 (support for afforestation / woodland creation), 8.2 (establishment / maintenance of agro-forestry systems), 8.3 (prevention of damage to forests), 8.4 (restoration of damage to forests), 8.4 (support for restoration of damage to forests from forest fires and natural disasters and catastrophic events), 8.5 (improving resilience and environmental value of forest ecosystems), 10.1 (agri-environment-climate) and 16.8 (Support for drawing up of forest management plans) – *see Priority 4 section above for Measures 4.4, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5 and 16.8.*

## **FOCUS AREA 5b**

Please see Priority 1 section above for information on Farming Connect delivery of Measures 1 (Knowledge Transfer) and 2 (Advisory Services) and also Measure 16.1 (EIP) during the reporting period. Under Focus Area 5b a total of €6.20m has been paid, of this €1.62m was during 2019. By the end of 2019 there was a cumulative total of €8.79m in committed funds, the majority of which was under Measure 4 (€7.78m).

### **Measure 4.1**

The **Sustainable Production Grant (SPG)** under Measure 4.1 provides support to help farmers improve the economic and environmental performance of their agricultural holding in line with the WG's and agriculture industry in Wales' vision for more sustainable, profitable and resilient farm businesses. The **Farm Business Grant Scheme (FBG)** programmed under Measure 4.1 aims to help farmers in Wales to improve the economic and environmental performance of their agricultural holdings. In total, Measure 4.1 under Focus Area 5b had supported 923 holdings, with €9.38m investment and €5.60m cumulative expenditure incurred by the end of 2019. See Priority 2 section of this report for more information on Measure 4.1, also Focus Area 5d below.

## **FOCUS AREA 5C**

Please see Priority 1 section above for information on Farming Connect delivery of Measures 1 (Knowledge Transfer) and 2 (Advisory Services) and also Measure 16.1 (EIP) during the reporting period. Under Focus Area 5c a total of €1.09m had been paid by end 2019, of which 0.75m was in 2019. Cumulative committed funds under FA5c by the end of 2019 was €2.26m.

### **Measure 4.3**

**Measure 4.3** was to have been delivered through the 'Farm and Forestry Infrastructure Scheme, but this scheme was never launched, and had no activity or spend throughout 2019. The WG will continue to review this measure in preparation for the 4th modification.

### **Measure 7**

Measure 7 was delivered via the WG operated grant scheme called the **Rural Community Development Fund (RCDF)**. Under RCDF the WG offered grants for eligible interventions designed to prevent and mitigate the impact of poverty in rural communities improving conditions which can lead to future jobs and growth. Measure 7 is delivered under three Focus Areas: 5c, 6b and 6c with the majority of the financial allocation for the Measure programmed under Focus Area 6b. See Focus Area 6b for Measure 7.1, 7.4, 7.5, 7.6 & 7.7. See Focus Area 6c for Measure 7.3 (broadband infrastructure). The three objectives of RCDF are to:

1. Promote social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas.
2. Help those most deprived in rural Wales and those that have limited scope to change their circumstances
3. Develop the resilience and capability of rural communities so that they are better able to cope with and adapt to change.

Applicants to RCDF were expected to discuss their proposals with their LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs) before submitting their EOI(s) to the WG for appraisal. The LEADER LAGs were therefore a key part of the “pipeline” for EOIs to enter the RCDF Scheme. The work of the LAGs to engage stakeholders, animate the territory, build capacity, pilot potential solutions to barriers/ways to maximise opportunities would lead to the identification of project proposals which require investment funding. Once the idea has been sufficiently developed an EOI would be submitted to RCDF.

It became apparent, however, that the result of this Community-led Local Development (CLLD) approach reflects the experience under the LEADER Measure in that far fewer project proposals came forward naturally in relation to broadband or to energy saving and community-based renewable energy generation. The WG discussed with the CLLD Consultation Group the possibility of having EOI Rounds targeted only at Measure 7.2 (Renewable Energy and Energy Saving) and Measure 7.3 (Broadband Infrastructure). Subsequently an EOI Round was held in 2018 targeting these two Measures.

Since the start of the scheme in late 2015 there have been a total of seven RCDF EOI rounds. Please see Priority 6 section below for more information on Measure 7 and the Rural Community Development Fund. No Expression of Interest Rounds were held under the Rural Community Development Fund during 2019 and the WG does not anticipate running any further Expression of Interest Rounds. In total, Measure 7 under Focus Area 5c had supported 1 operation, with €101,225.47 total investment and €76,606.96 cumulative expenditure incurred by the end of 2019.

#### **Measure 8.5**

The **Glastir Woodland Management (GWM) Scheme** includes only legacy contracts from the previous 2007-2013 RDP and is paid through Measure 8.5 (support for investments improving resilience and environmental value of forest ecosystems) for capital payments and Measure 10.1 (agri-environment climate) for multi-annual, area-based payments. There were no operations, expenditure or land supported under FA 5c for this Measure during the reporting period, as the second Programme amendment approved during 2019 removed Measure 8.5 from Focus Area 5c. Please see Priority 4 & Focus Area 5e sections for further information on Measure 8.5.

#### **Measure 8.6**

**Measure 8.6** is delivered under Focus Areas 5c and 6a of the Programme through the **Timber Business Investment Scheme (TBIS)**. TBIS provides funding for capital investments that add value to forests by enabling woodland management activities, timber harvesting and / or timber processing. The scheme is open to private forest owners, local authorities, certain other public sector forest owners and small/medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and community organisations or forestry contractors.

Prior to 2019 there had been three EOI windows, with a total of 71 EOIs invited to full application, of which 45 full applications had been received. In 2019 the fourth EOI window ran from 1 February 2019 to 30 April 2019. A total of 18 EOIs were invited to submit full applications, and 10 have been received with a deadline of 28 February 2020. By the end of December 2019 there was €0.43m cumulative expenditure for this measure against Focus area 5c, all of which occurred in 2019.

#### **Measure 16.2, 16.6 & 16.9**

Measure 16.2 (support for pilot projects and for the development of new products, practises, processes and technologies) Measure 16.6 (support for cooperation among supply chain actors for sustainable provision of biomass for use in food and energy production and industrial processes) are delivered as part

of the **Co-operation and Supply Chain Development Scheme (C&SCD)** and are programmed under Focus Area 5c. There were no operations or expenditure made Measure 16 under FA5c in the reporting period. Further information on Measure 16 C&SCD can be found in Priority 3, 5 and 6 of this report.

### **Measure 16.8**

Measure 16.8 is delivered under Focus Areas 4a, 5c, 5e & 6a through the **Co-operative Forestry Planning Scheme (CFPS)**. The CFPS provides financial support for a range of activities to encourage planning for the creation of broadleaved and conifer woodland to improve the management of natural resources and contribute to the well-being of rural communities within Wales.

The second EOI window for this Scheme closed in April 2018 with two EOIs invited to submit full applications. The deadline for submission was July 2019. To date, €0.01m has been paid in three installments to one project. The CFPS also delivers to Focus Areas 5c, 5e and 6a within the report.

## **FOCUS AREA 5D**

Please see Priority 1 section above for information on Farming Connect delivery of Measures 1 (Knowledge Transfer) and 2 (Advisory Services) and also Measure 16.1 (EIP) during the reporting period. Under Focus Area 5d, a total of €12.22m had been paid by end 2019, of which €4.93m was in 2019. There was €20.38m in cumulative committed expenditure of which the majority was under Measure 4 (€10.31m) and Measure 10.1 (€8.41m).

### **Measure 4.1**

The **Sustainable Production Grant (SPG)** and the **Farm Business Grant Scheme (FBG)** are programmed under Measure 4.1 (support for investments in agricultural holdings) providing support to agricultural holding in line with the WG's and agriculture industry in Wales' vision for more sustainable, profitable and resilient farm businesses. There were 44 operations with €3.81m in cumulative expenditure incurred in respect of this Measure under Focus Area 5d, of which €2.32m was incurred during 2019. Please see Priority 2 section of this report for more information on Measure 4.1 delivery.

### **Measure 4.4**

The capital works element of the **Glastir Advanced** scheme is delivered under Measure 4.4 (non-productive investments linked to agri-environment-climate objectives) alongside Measure 10.1 for Glastir Advanced. By end of December 2019, there was €0.92m in cumulative expenditure for 60 ongoing operations under Focus Area 5d. See Priority 4 section of this report for more information on Measure 4.4 and Glastir.

### **Measure 10.1**

Delivery under Measure 10.1 (Agri-environment-Climate) includes the Glastir Entry, Advanced and Commons schemes. It also includes multi-annual, area-based payments for existing farm woodlands in Glastir Woodland Management. See Priority 4 section above for information on these Schemes. During the reporting period there were 580 contracts covering 74,465.65 ha under Focus Area 5d for Measure 10.1.

By the end 2019, a total of €6.37m was paid under M10.1 FA 5d. See Priority 4 section of this report for more information on Measure 10.1 and Glastir Schemes.

## **FOCUS AREA 5E**

Please see Priority 1 section above for information on Farming Connect delivery of Measures 1 (Knowledge Transfer) and 2 (Advisory Services) and also Measure 16.1 (EIP) during the reporting period. Under Focus Area 5e a total of €11.28m (€3.43m during 2019) had been paid by end 2019. There was €13.60m in cumulative committed expenditure by the end of 2019, the highest commitments were under Measure 8 (€7.29m) and Measure 4 (€3.25m).

### **Measure 2.1**

Under Measure 2.1 **Glastir** used advisory support to have water management plans carried out and woodland plans continue to be verified against the UK Forestry Standard by Natural Resources Wales (NRW). It also requires Wales' archaeological trusts to give advice on Glastir Woodland Creation projects, throughon suitable design. See Priority 4 section of this report for further information. In total, Measure 2.1 under Focus Area 5e had supported 34 operation, with €171,138.91 cumulative expenditure incurred by the end of 2019.

### **Measure 4.4**

The capital works element of the **Glastir Advanced** scheme is delivered under Measure 4.4 (non-productive investments linked to agri-environment-climate objectives) alongside Measure 10.1 for Glastir Advanced. By end of December 2019, there was €2.47m in cumulative expenditure for 1,342 ongoing operations under Focus Area 5d. See Priority 4 section of this report for more information on Measure 4.4 and Glastir.

### **Measures 8.1 & 8.2**

Schemes delivered under Measure 8.1 include legacy contracts under 2007-13 Forestry schemes and also **Glastir Woodland Creation** under both Measures 8.1 (support for afforestation / creation of woodland) and 8.2 (support for establishment and maintenance of agro-forestry systems). See Priority 4 section above for further information on these Schemes. Total cumulative expenditure for Measure 8.1 under Focus Area 5e was €3.92m by the end of 2019. There has been no expenditure for Measure 8.2 during 2019 under this Focus Area. During the reporting period for Measure 8.1 - establishment, there were 47 beneficiaries with 340.23 ha total area supported. For Measure 8.1 - maintenance, for the 2019 calender year only there were 29 beneficiaries with 103.52 ha area supported.

### **Measure 8.3**

The **Forest Monitoring & Risk Management Scheme** is delivered under Measure 8.3 (prevention of damage to forests) by Natural Resources Wales (NRW). The objective of the Scheme is to support monitoring, mitigation and prevention of harmful results from current tree or woodland environment pest or disease outbreaks. The majority of the scheme's funding (75%) is linked to Focus Area 5e with the remaining funds programmed under Priority 4, Focus Area 4a.

The application from NRW was approved in December 2018. In calendar year 2019, NRW claimed €0.1m (£0.1m), and a cumulative total of €0.2m (£0.18m). The overall findings have shown a reduction in *Phytophthora ramorum* across Wales when compared to 2017 and 2018. NRW have met the target for both the Area of Woodlands surveyed and the number of samples tested. NRW has carried out activities as required under this measure since 1st April 2017. This has been through aerial and ground surveys. Aerial surveys have covered 112,000 ha in 2017 and 138,000 ha in 2018, and 84,000ha in 2019 with a cumulative total 259.000ha. Field surveys have covered 2,150 ha in 2017 and 1,200 ha in 2018 and 930 ha in 2019. The cumulative area surveyed is 4280 ha. This has resulted in a total of 793 Statutory Notices issued in 2019. NRW have carried out minor survey work for Chalara Dieback of ash.

Description	Target	Current
Area of woodland protected from disease	306,000ha	306,000ha
Area of woodland surveyed for disease	50,000ha	75,217 ha
Samples tested for disease.	25	691

#### Measure 8.4

The **Glastir Woodland Restoration (GWR)** scheme under Measure 8.4 (support for restoration of damage to forests from forest fires and natural disasters and catastrophic events) supports the re-stocking of larch woodlands that have been infected or threatened by the fungal pathogen *Phytophthora ramorum*. There have been seven EOIs opened to date with one more to open with a total cumulative expenditure of €3.20m spent in the reporting period.

By the end of December 2019, a total of 1,070ha of woodland has been restocked, with 152 beneficiaries supported.

#### Measure 8.5

The **Glastir Woodland Management (GWM)** Scheme includes only legacy contracts from the previous 2007-2013 RDP and is paid through Measure 8.5 (support for investments improving resilience and environmental value of forest ecosystems) for capital payments and Measure 10.1 (agri-environment climate) for multi-annual, area-based payments. By December 2019 there were 116 operations under Focus Area 5e for this Measure, covering 548.85 ha with €0.11m in cumulative expenditure paid. The majority of the allocation for this Measure is under Priority 4 with remainder programmed under Focus Areas 5e, 5c and 6a. Please see Priority 4 section above for further information on Measure 8.5.

**Glastir Woodland Creation** uses this measure to pay contract holders a €941.18 (£800.00) contribution towards Registered Glastir Woodland Planner's fees to develop a verified woodland creation plan. It is not reasonably possible to disaggregate payments for plans that supported focus area 4a and 5e elements in them. To date, €280,470 have been paid for plans, €17,882 in 2019.

#### Measure 10.1

Delivery under Measure 10.1 (Agri-environment-Climate) includes the Glastir Entry, Advanced and Commons schemes. It also includes multi-annual, area-based payments for existing farm woodlands in Glastir Woodland Management. See Priority 4 section above for information on these Schemes. During the reporting period there were 576 contracts covering 2,035.91 ha under FA5e for Measure 10.1. By the

end of 2019 a total of €0.87m in cumulative expenditure had been paid under M10.1 Focus Area 5e. See Priority 4 section of this report for more information on Measure 10 and Glastir.

### **Measure 16.8**

This Measure (support for drawing up of forest management plans or equivalent instruments) is delivered under through the Co-operative Forestry Planning Scheme. To date, €0.01m has been paid in 3 installments to 1 project. See Priority 4 section above for further information on activity for this Measure.

### **PRIORITY 6**

Measures 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 16 and 19 are programmed under Priority 6. Please see Priority 1 section above for information on Measures 1 (Knowledge Transfer) and 2 (Advisory Services) Farming Connect delivery and also Measure 16.1 (EIP) during the reporting period. Also see Priority 3 and Priority 5 sections for information on Measure 16 (Co-operation), Priority 4 for Measure 8 activity also Priority 5 for Measure 7 (Basic Services and village renewal).

During the reporting period expenditure incurred under Priority 6 stood at €52.62m of which €24.83m was for activity undertaken during 2019. Committed expenditure under this priority totalled €10.1m during 2019, with the highest cumulative commitments under Measure 16 (€95.44m), Measure 19 (€58.92m) and Measure 7 (€23.60m).

Regarding achievement against Target Indicators under Priority 6 of the Programme for Indicator T20 'jobs created in supported projects' a cumulative total of two was achieved against a target of 765 by the end of 2019. For Indicator T23 'jobs created in supported projects LEADER' achievement by the end of 2019 was 12 against a target of 100. For Indicator T22 'percentage of rural population benefitting from improved services / infrastructures' 2.34% (71,067.00 absolute value) was achieved against a baseline of 1,381,745 net population by the end of 2019.

Measures programmed under Priority 6 include;

- Focus Area 6a: Measures 6.4 (investments in creation / development of non-agricultural activities), 8.5 improving resilience and environmental value of forest ecosystems) , 8.6 (investments in forest technologies and forest products), 16.8 (Support for drawing up of forest management plans) and 16.9 (support for diversification of farming activities into activities concerning health care, social integration, community-supported agriculture and education about the environment and food)– *see also Priority 4 section above for Measures 8.5, 8.6 and 16.8*
- Focus Area 6b: Measures 7 (Basic Services and village renewal - excluding 7.3 broadband infrastructure), 16.2 (pilot projects, development new products, practices, processes and technologies), 16.3 (co-operator among small operators in joint work processes, sharing facilities and resources and for developing / marketing tourism) and 19 (support for LEADER local development) *see also Priority 5 section above for Measure 7.*
- Focus Area 6c: Measure 7.3 (broadband infrastructure)

### **FOCUS AREA 6A**

Please see Priority 1 section above for information on Measure 2 (Advisory Services) through Farming Connect during the reporting period. During the reporting period under Focus Area 6a a cumulative total

of €4.19m had been paid, of which €2.45m was for activity undertaken during 2019. There was €24.80m in cumulative committed expenditure by the end of 2019.

### **Measure 6.2**

This Measure (Business Start Up Aid for non agri activities in rural areas) was removed as part of the second programme amendment approved during 2019.

### **Measure 6.4**

There are two Schemes delivered under Measure 6.4 (support for investments in creation and development of non-agricultural activities) one relates to the Food and Drink sector and one for the Tourism sector. These were the main gaps identified in the intervention logic in the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.

The **Rural Business Investment Scheme - FOOD (RBISF)** was a capital investments scheme to support projects that offer clear and quantifiable benefits to the food and drink industry in Wales. The Scheme was opened to existing and start up micro & small food and drink processors and manufacturers throughout Wales. This was a capital investment Scheme for food and drink processing or manufacturing activities currently not eligible under the Food Business Investment Scheme (FBIS).

The maximum grant for an individual investment project is 40% of the total eligible cost with a maximum of €58k (£50k) for any individual investment project. During this reporting period, a sixth EOI window was opened, with three projects invited to submit full applications by April 2019. A seventh EOI round closed in February 2019. A total of 21 EOIs were received and 16 were invited to submit full applications by the deadline of 19 June 2019. Of these, four Applications have been approved. These windows resulted in 123.8 jobs being created.

This programme has closed for new applications and a closure note has been sent to RPW (the paying agency).

The second Scheme under Measure 6.4 is the **Micro Small Business Fund MSBF** delivered by Visit Wales (VW). This Scheme targets private sector businesses to support priority tourism products, including: high quality serviced, self catering, camping and caravan park accommodation products, destination restaurants; visitor attractions and activity products. The MSBF targets viable and sustainable private sector tourism capital projects that will: support the development of priority tourism products and create and safeguard jobs in rural areas. The Scheme opened mid 2017 and has to date approved 41 projects, totalling €5.18m (£4.4m) Notable projects supported under the MSBF include:

- Llechwedd, Blaenau Ffestiniog, new 4 Star hotel & safari tents
- Sandymount House, Rhosneigr, destination restaurant with rooms
- Plassey Leisure Park, Wrexham, 5 Star holiday park expansion
- Llechwen Hall, Caerphilly, 4 Star hotel upgrade
- Discovery Centre (Ace Llanelli Ltd)
- Synergy Yachting Ltd - RibRide, Menai Bridge

By the end of 2019 under Measure 6.4 as a whole a cumulative total of €0.89m in expenditure had been paid with two operations approved under Focus Area 6a of the Programme.



## Measure 8.6

Measure 8.6 is delivered under Focus Areas 5c and 6a of the Programme through the **Timber Business Investment Scheme (TBIS)**. TBIS provides funding for capital investments that add value to forests by enabling woodland management activities, timber harvesting and / or timber processing. The Scheme is open to private forest owners, local authorities, certain other public sector forest owners and small / medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and community organisations or forestry contractors. Prior to 2019 there had been three EOI windows, with a total of 71 EOIs invited to full application, of which 45 full applications had been received. In 2019 the fourth EOI window ran from 1 February 2019 to 30 April 2019. A total of 18 EOIs were invited to submit full applications, and 10 have been received with a deadline of 28 February 2020. By the end of 2019 a cumulative total of €3.03m had been paid.

## Measure 16.8

Measure 16.8 is delivered under Focus Area 4a, 5c, 5e & 6a through the **Co-operative Forestry Planning Scheme (CFPS)**. To date, €0.01m has been paid in three installments to one project. See Priority 4 section above for further information on this Measure.

## Measure 16.9

Measure 16.9 (support for diversification of farming activities into activities concerning health care, social integration, community-supported agriculture and education about the environment and food) is delivered as part of the **Co-operation and Supply Chain Development Scheme (C&SCD)**. There was no expenditure or cooperation operations supported by the end of 2019 under this Measure. For further information on M16 C&SCD scheme see Priority 3 and 5 sections of this report.

## **FOCUS AREA 6B**

Under Focus Area 6b a cumulative total of €47.81m had been paid during the reporting period, of which €21.92m was for activity undertaken during 2019. There was €155.40m in committed expenditure during 2019 with the highest commitments under Measure 16 (€70.10m) and Measure 19 (€58.92m).

As part of the second programme amendment agreed during 2019 Measure 1 was introduced under FA6b. During 2019 there €0.26 of committed expenditure against a commitment of €3.53m.

## Measure 7

Measure 7 was delivered via a WG operated grant scheme called the **Rural Community Development Fund (RCDF)**. Under RCDF the WG offered grants for eligible interventions designed to prevent and mitigate the impact of poverty in rural communities improving conditions which can lead to future jobs and growth. Measure 7 is delivered under three Focus Areas: 5c, 6b and 6c with the majority of the financial allocation for the Measure programmed under Focus Area 6b. See Focus Area 6c for Measure 7.3 (broadband infrastructure) and Focus Area 5c for Measure 7.2 (investments of small scale infrastructure including renewable energy). The three objectives of RCDF are to:

1. Promote social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas.
2. Help those most deprived in rural Wales and those that have limited scope to change their circumstances.

3. Develop the resilience and capability of rural communities so that they are better able to cope with and adapt to change.

Applicants to RCDF were expected to discuss their proposals with their LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs) before submitting their EOI(s) to the WG for appraisal. The LEADER LAGs were a key part of the “pipeline” for EOIs to enter the RCDF Scheme. The work of the LAGs to engage stakeholders, animate the territory, build capacity, pilot potential solutions to barriers/ways to maximise opportunities helped lead to the identification of project proposals which required investment funding.

It has become apparent, however, that the result of this Community-led Local Development (CLLD) approach reflects the experience under the LEADER Measure in that the majority of EOIs related to sub-Measures 7.4, 7.5 and 7.6 feeding Focus Area 6b.

Since the start of the scheme in late 2015 there have been a total of seven RCDF EOI rounds. Please see Priority 6 section below for more information on Measure 7 and the Rural Community Development Fund. No EOI rounds were held under the Rural Community Development Fund during 2019 and the WG does not anticipate running any further Expression of Interest Rounds.

By the end of 2019 a cumulative total of €0.14m was paid under Measure 7.2; €6.05m under Measure 7.4; €0.52m under Measure 7.6 and €0.60m under Measure 7.7.

See Focus Area 6c for Measure 7.3 (broadband infrastructure) and Focus Area 5c for Measure 7.2 (investments of small scale infrastructure including renewable energy).

### **Measure 7.5**

The capital support grant scheme ‘**Tourism Amenity Investment Support (TAIS) Scheme – Rural** is delivered by Visit wales (VW) through Measure 7.5 (support for investments for public use in recreational infrastructure, tourist information and small scale tourism infrastructure) under Focus Area 6B of the Programme. The TAIS scheme offers small-scale investment to improve the signposting of touristic sites, to construct and modernise tourism information centres, to provide visitor information and guidance. Funding is also provided for the support of the construction of shelters and safety facilities linked to soft-tourism and the establishment of e-booking systems for tourist services. Investments will be supported for the development of soft tourism (small scale, locally specific product, local ownership and labour, local business linkages, strong social-cultural affinities, limited negative environmental impact). This activity under Measure 7.5 will complement the tourism business development activity under Measure 6.4.

There have been two rounds of TAIS supporting 47 projects. A cumulative total of €2.37m had been paid under Measure 7.5 for activity undertaken during the reporting period.

### **Measure 16**

#### **Measure 16.2**

Measure 16.2 (support for pilot projects and for the development of new products, practises, processes and technologies) is delivered as part of the **Co-operation and Supply Chain Development Scheme (C&SCD)**.

The WG opened an additional grant Scheme under Measure 16.2(a) – support for pilot projects. It is called the **Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being (ENRaW)** grant Scheme and is designed to support businesses, organisations and communities to work together under the umbrella of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act to increase their resilience by tackling issues such as:

- Poverty
- Financial sustainability
- Climate change
- Environment / local environment quality
- Social exclusion

All projects to be supported by ENRaW must fit with delivering national priorities as set out in the WG’s “Prosperity for All”, Natural Resources Policy and any relevant issue-specific plans such as the Nature Recovery Action Plan, the Action Plan for Pollinators and the Noise and Soundscape Action Plan, as well as local strategies and plans (e.g. local Green Infrastructure, Biodiversity and Air Quality Plans). The principles of Sustainable Management of Natural Resources must have been clearly used in planning the development and delivering of the proposed activity.

ENRaW predominantly support projects that make improvements in residential areas by delivering benefits for people, businesses and their communities. It focuses on pilot and demonstration projects at the right scale; promoting cooperation and collaboration to address the following three themes of action:

1. Developing, regenerating and broadening access to sustainable green infrastructure through nature based solutions;
2. Improving the quality of the urban and rural built environment; and
3. Developing resilient ecological networks and nature based solutions.

During 2019 one Expression of Interest (EOI) Window was opened for the ENRaW grant scheme which closed on the 22nd November 2019. A total of 20 EOIs were received by the deadline with a total grant request of €31.8m (£27m) against an indicative budget allocation of €17.6m (£15m) for the Window resulting in five EOIs being invited to progress to Stage 2 of the Application process.

**The CTA Community Transport Solution** (‘Connecting communities in Wales’) under Measure 16.2 aims to develop pan-Wales, demand responsive community transport solutions in partnership. It seeks to develop sustainable Community Transport networks and build the resilience and capacity of the community transport sector in Wales, recognising that in doing so it can assist in tackling transport issues and challenges faced by rural communities. To the end of 2019 €0.19m (£0.16m) of grant has been paid against a total expected expenditure for the programme of €1.25m (£1.07m). There have been 15 cooperation operations supported by the end of 2019, with 145 participants in training, 288 stakeholders engaged and 12 feasibility studies.

### **Measure 16.3**

Under Measure 16.3 (other co-operation among small operators in organising joint work processes and sharing facilities and resources, and for developing/marketing tourism) the **Regional Tourism Network and Marketing Support scheme** is delivered by Visit Wales (VW). The principal aim of the Scheme is

to increase the profitability and resilience of the individual SME businesses engaged. This scheme consists of two separate projects providing two distinct types of activity:

1. The **Regional Tourism Engagement Fund (RTEF)** which aims to support increased marketing of Wales to a chosen audience to increase visitor numbers into rural areas;
2. The **Tourism Product Innovation Fund (TPIF)** which provides revenue support for collaborative projects to develop opportunities and products within tourism destinations.

1. **Regional Tourism Engagement Fund (RTEF)**; this is a revenue fund designed to:

- Meet the strategic objectives of the WG Tourism Strategy;
- Support destinations across Wales to promote and develop distinctive, high quality visitor destinations through the delivery of the destination management plans to extend the season and increase spend;
- Enable destinations to maximise the benefits of aligning the with Year of Discovery 2019, future thematic years and the Wales Way;
- Reflect all or any of the three key themes for promoting tourism to Wales: Adventure, culture and landscape.

There have been two rounds of Funding launched under this scheme;

- As part of the first round funding 2018/2019 11 projects were approved totalling €1.14m (£0.9m);
- In the second round funding 2019/2021 a total of 10 RTEF projects were approved totalling €0.6m (£0.5m).

Notable projects include:

- Sleeping Giants is a project to produce a larger than life piece of 'earth art' in one of Wales' most special landscapes the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB;
- Year of the Sea 'Surfari Bus' on tour. The project is a high-impact campaign tour of Ireland and Wales to promote Swansea Bay as a 'Year of the Sea' destination;
- the 30th Anniversary of the Blue Flag programme, falling in the Year of the Sea, is an opportunity to showcase the quality of the Welsh coast and its beautiful beaches;
- the Wales Coast Path (WCP) is made up of 870 miles of breath-taking coastline. The project aims to re-launch the WCP nationally and internationally by delivering a reinvigorated mass marketing campaign.

2. **Tourism Product Innovation Fund (TPIF)**; this fund aims to work with tourism partners across Wales to delivery the 10% growth target set out in the tourism strategy by supporting activity which will:

- encourage closer joint working between trade partnerships to improve the product offer and help grow the tourism economy in Wales in a sustainable way;
- enable the private sector to maximise the benefits from aligning with the Year of Discovery 2019, future thematic years and The Wales Way;

- reflect all or any of the three key themes for promoting tourism to Wales of adventure, culture and landscape.

In the first round of funding 10 projects were approved, totalling €1.8m (£1.5m). In the second round of funding 12 projects were approved totalling €1.5m (£1.3m).

Notable projects include:

- a joint proposal developed on behalf of the 11 members of Great Little Trains Wales (GLTW) will enable them to reach new markets;
- the Small World Theatre Ltd, Cragen Sea Monster tour will deliver a series of visually exciting events with artistic content, inspired by environmental issues during Year of the Sea and into Year of Discovery;
- the Spirit of Wales project suggests a sustainable future for the rural/coastal churches/chapels falling into disuse & disrepair by creating an innovative tourism product that celebrates their cultural and heritage values;
- Dr Beynons Bug farm Pollinator Trail will create a physical link between sustainable tourism businesses in Pembrokeshire via a physical 'Pollinator trail' to be explored by visitors.

### **Marketing Networks**

In summary, the **Regional Tourism Network and Marketing Support** project was awarded €3.53m (£3m) towards the tourism network grant scheme (i.e. RTEF/TPIF). Of which €3.53m (£3m) has been committed in round 1 and 2 and will be fully spent by March 2021.

In addition €8.24m (£7m) was awarded for the delivery of a national marketing campaign to support the local and regional grant activity via RTEF/TPIF.

To date €4.94m (£4.2m) has been submitted via 3 separate claims. The 4rd claim is currently in progress and will be submitted in July 2020 for approx €2.71m (£2.3m).

There are currently a total of 21 approved projects for 2018/2019, with 11 under RTEF at €1.14m (£0.97m) and 10 under TPIF at €0.60m (£0.51m), with a total value of €1.74m (£1.48m).

Under Measure 16 a cumulative total of €11.38m had paid during the reporting period through Focus Area 6b with 28 cooperation operations supported.

### **Measure 19**

**LEADER** is a form of Territorial Development. Each Local Action Group (LAG) covers a geographical area and prepares a Local Development Strategy (LDS) which sets out a detailed explanation of the area; an analysis of that area through a SWOT assessment; a series of aims and objectives for the area and proposals for activities or initiatives that would achieve those aims and objectives. There are 18 LAGs covering eligible (non-urban) wards in 21 of the 22 Local Authority Areas in Wales.

Implementation is progressing well and the Wales Rural Network Support Unit has loaded information on over 550 Local Action Group pilots from the 18 Local Action Groups onto their database, available on the WG's Business Wales website:

<https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/local-action-groups-and-projects>

This database presents an opportunity to platform the results of the LEADER pilot activity. It is important to highlight the journey begun by LEADER through to jobs and growth. The process can take many years but LEADER has been implemented in Wales for over 25 years and there are many high profile, award-winning examples such as Halen Môn Anglesey Sea Salt of an initiative under LEADER moving through a pre-commercial pilot to the start-up of a commercial business and then its further development to economic success. This video gives further Welsh examples:

[https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/news-events-and-case-studies/case\\_study/rural-development-programme-case-studies-journey-leader](https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/news-events-and-case-studies/case_study/rural-development-programme-case-studies-journey-leader)

Under the LEADER Scheme (Measure 19.3) the Welsh Local Action Groups (LAGs) have the opportunity to engage in inter-territorial and Trans-national Co-operation with LAGs or similar bodies. Co-operation can involve exchanges of best practice, mentoring, staff exchanges and/or joint projects. In Wales LEADER Co-operation operates on a LAG-led basis (rather than a series of Managing Authority bidding rounds). This means that Welsh LAGs have committed budgets for Co-operation projects.

LEADER Co-operation is recognised as a valuable way to widen local views, to bring new knowledge into a Local Action Group's area in order to improve the implementation of local strategies. It can boost the innovative character of local development actions and contribute to increased competitiveness of the area through e.g. capacity building, bringing in new business partners, transfer of knowledge, innovative ideas and new skills.

The WG made participation in M19.3 Co-operation mandatory for LEADER LAGs under the programme. Therefore, it is a requirement that each LAG must undertake at least one co-operation project or activity during the programme period. All Local Development Strategies contain a commitment to undertake at least 1 Co-operation project during the programme period.

The Wales Rural Network Support Unit has a particular role to support LEADER Local Action Groups with regard to trans-national projects. There are more LEADER Co-operation projects under development by the LAGs currently. The help stimulate further ideas the Rural Networks of Wales, Ireland, Scotland and Northern Ireland brought together over 60 participants in a unique, collaborative LEADER Co-operation workshop in Glasgow in March 2019:

<https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/news-events-and-case-studies/event/uk-ireland-cooperation-conference-2021-march-2019-glasgow>

There are also four Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) funded under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) who employ the principles of Community-led Local Development to work with Welsh coastal communities. Although Wales does not have multi-funded Local Development Strategies there are nevertheless strong links between the LAGs and the FLAGs and there is a need for good communication throughout implementation to signpost projects to the appropriate fund and also to share best practice.

During 2019 LEADER groups have been unable to submit claims which means they haven't been able to provide updated figures for the current level of delivery. In early 2020 the Welsh Government conducted an exercise to gather updated indicator details for the LEADER measures which show that up to the end of March 2020 LEADER in Wales has achieved:

- 54 co-operation projects (47 inter-territorial and 7 trans-national);

- 28 jobs through supported projects;
- 25 jobs safeguarded;
- 9139 stakeholders engaged;
- 31428 participants supported;
- 106 feasibility studies;
- 109 networks established;
- 68 community hubs;
- 691 information dissemination actions;
- 825 promotional and/or marketing activities.

During the reporting period a cumulative total of €21.09m was paid under Measure 19, the majority of which was under Measures 19.2 (€12.89m) and 19.4 (€7.50m). All of the LEADER allocation under Measure 19 has been committed for the lifetime of the Programme.

### **FOCUS AREA 6C**

Please see Priority 1 section above for information on Measure 1 (Knowledge Transfer) through Farming Connect during the reporting period. Under Focus Area 6c a cumulative total of €0.61m had been paid, of which €0.46m was for activity undertaken during 2019. There was €1.04m in cumulative committed expenditure by the end of 2019.

#### **Measure 7.3**

Measure 7 was delivered via a WG operated grant scheme called the **Rural Community Development Fund (RCDF)**. Under RCDF the WG offered grants for eligible interventions designed to prevent and mitigate the impact of poverty in rural communities improving conditions which can lead to future jobs and growth. Measure 7 is delivered under three Focus Areas: 5c, 6b and 6c with the majority of the financial allocation for the Measure programmed under Focus Area 6b. See Focus Area 5c for Measure 7.2 (investments of small scale infrastructure including renewable energy). See Focus Area 6b for more information on the RCDF.

To the end of 2019 Measure 7.3 under Focus Area 6c has supported 3 operations with €367,890.04 cumulative expenditure.

*European Commission Currency Converter – exchange rates 2019 monthly*

<b><i>MONTH</i></b>	<b><i>EUR/GBP</i></b>
<i>January 2019</i>	0.90273
<i>February 2019</i>	0.87341
<i>March 2019</i>	0.85503
<i>April 2019</i>	0.85555
<i>May 2019</i>	0.8634

<i>June 2019</i>	0.88373
<i>July 2019</i>	0.89428
<i>August 2019</i>	0.91653
<i>September 2019</i>	0.90531
<i>October 2019</i>	0.88778
<i>November 2019</i>	0.862
<i>December 2019</i>	0.8518

*The planning rate of €1 = £0.85 has been used for all commitments / allocation values within this Report*

**1.d) Key information on achievements towards the milestones set in the performance Framework based on Table F**

This section applies to AIR(s) 2016, 2017, 2018 only



### 1.e) Other RDP specific element [optional]

not applicable

### 1.f) Where appropriate, the contribution to macro-regional and sea basin strategies

As stipulated by the Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, article 27(3) on the "content of programmes", article 96(3)(e) on the "content, adoption and amendment of operational programmes under the Investment for growth and jobs goal", article 111(3), article 111(4)(d) on "implementation reports for the Investment for growth and jobs goal", and Annex 1, section 7.3 on "contribution of mainstream programmes to macro-regional and sea-basin strategies, this programme contributes to MRS(s) and/or SBS:

The WGRC-RDP2014-2020 will have a contribution to the Atlantic Sea Basin Strategy (ATLSBS). The aims of the ATLSBS are:

- To promote entrepreneurship and innovation;
- Protect secure and enhance the marine and coastal environment;
- Improve accessibility and connectivity;
- Create a social inclusive and sustainable model of regional development.

The coastal economy is highly relevant to Wales as the Welsh nation is closely connected to the sea with 60% of the population living on or near the coast, and the furthest settlement being only 50 miles from the Irish Sea. As such the support offered through the various schemes delivered through the RDP will have a contribution against all of these areas. Innovation is a cross cutting priority of the programme, and the programme has various avenues that will support innovation in areas that affect the coastal economy, for example through farmer led innovations that might promote more sustainable practices that impact upon the coastal environment, food centres supporting food businesses that contribute to the coastal economy, and local level innovation supported through LEADER that help support coastal communities.

Similarly the interface between land management practices, river water and the coastal environment is something that has been recognised as increasingly important. Many elements of the RDP support farmers and land managers to adopt environmentally friendly practices that will limit the environmental impact of farming on rivers and watercourses in Wales. These include: advice, training and knowledge transfer provision from farming connect that is designed to encourage more environmentally friendly farming practices; the sustainable production grant which provides capital grants to farm businesses to improve their environmental performance and window four, run in 2019, focused specifically on water quality; the glastir suite of agri-environment schemes and the sustainable management scheme. While the importance of the relationship between environmental land management practices delivered under the RDP and the coastal environment is recognised there is currently an absence of evidence on this relationship in Wales. Having recognised this, the Environment and Rural Affairs Monitoring and Modelling Programme (ERAMMP), the successor to GMEP, is considering ways in which this interface can be better explored.

In terms of improving accessibility/connectivity and creating a socially inclusive and sustainable model of community development the Wales RDP has a number of schemes that contribute to rural and coastal communities as well as businesses operating in those communities. LEADER is the main mechanisms for support for rural community development in Wales and operates closely with the four Welsh FLAGs. With regards to accessibility/connectivity the CTA community transport solutions project under measure 16.2 aims to develop sustainable community transport networks across Wales in recognition of the challenges faced in rural communities regarding transport and access. On the rural economy side, it is noted that tourism plays an increasing role in the coastal economy of Wales, and the RDP provides substantial support to the tourism sector through the RDP through the Micro Small Business fund, the Tourism amenity investment support scheme and the Regional Tourism Engagement Fund. More information on these schemes are included in Section 1c of this report.

- EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)
- EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)
- EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)
- EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP)
- Atlantic Sea Basin Strategy (ATLSBS)



**1.g) Currency rate used for conversion AIR (non EUR countries)**

The planning rate of €1 = £0.85 has been used for all commitments / allocation values within this Report

## 2. THE PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE EVALUATION PLAN.

### 2.a) Description of any modifications made to the evaluation plan in the RDP during the year, with their justification

1. **Objectives and purpose:** The objectives and purpose of the Evaluation Plan both remain the same; no additional Programme-specific objectives have been added.
2. **Governance and coordination:** There have been no changes to this part of the evaluation plan.
3. **Evaluation topics:** There have been no changes to this part of the evaluation plan. It is still the intention of the Strategy team to prioritise evaluation activities on schemes funded through the RDP which will in turn inform later evaluation activity. Higher level programme evaluations will be done towards the end of the programme and will be broken down into the thematic areas.
4. **Evaluation activities:** There have been no changes to this part of the evaluation plan
5. **Data and information management:** As part of the second modification the methods for collecting and collating data through PPIMS and RPW online. Socio economic measures by SMU are mostly collected through WEFO online and stored on PPIMS. Land based measures managed by RPW are collected through the CAPIT IT platform.
6. **Timeline:** There have been no changes to this part of the evaluation plan.
7. **Communication of evaluation results:** There have been no additional changes in the communication strategy beyond those made as part of the first modification approved in 2017.
8. **Resources:** There have been no substantial changes in the resources to implement the evaluation plan. The TA budget for evaluation has been reviewed to ensure it is sufficient to deliver the evaluation plan.

### 2.b) A description of the evaluation activities undertaken during the year (in relation to section 3 of the evaluation plan)

#### **Preparing and conducting the assessment of the contribution of the RDP to rural development priorities, of programme results and impacts, including a description of evaluation approach and methods chosen.**

The Research Monitorign and Evaluation (RME) team commissioned an evaluation of the Knowledge Transfer, Innovation and Advisory Services Scheme, known otherwise as Farming Connect in early 2018. The evaluation is employing a number of methods including a series of four regional focus groups undertaken three times over the course of the evaluation. These focus groups will enable the early identification of any issue adversely affecting the delivery of the scheme and will also inform subsequent research activity. The other main element of the research will include 13 longitudinal case studies that will be spread across the three different lots of farming connect activity. The rationale behind the longitudinal case study approach is to develop an understanding of not just what is working, but how certain elements of the scheme are working and how they might then be improved. The first phase of the

evaluation took place over the course of 2018 and early 2019. The findings from the first phase of fieldwork were presented in the first annual report that was agreed in late 2019 and will be published in early 2020. The second stage of fieldwork was due to start in late 2019 however restrictions on research around the general election meant that this was delayed until early 2020.

The RME Team have designed the specification for the evaluation of the Sustainable Management Scheme. The evaluation will run for the duration of the scheme until late 2022. In order to assess the environmental outcomes of the scheme, this evaluation will use secondary data analysis of project level monitoring and evaluation activity which will be focused on the environmental changes achieved as part of project activity. The evaluation will also seek to make use of the environmental data captured by the Environment and Rural Affairs Monitoring and Modelling Programme (ERAMMP) to assist in assessing the environmental contribution of the scheme. In addition to the assessment of environmental contributions the evaluation will seek to provide an assessment of the value of landscape scale collaborative approaches to land management in terms of improving the sustainability and effectiveness of land management and how working collaboratively may be able to leverage wider economic and social objectives through better collaboration. To do this the evaluation will employ a mixed methods approach including longitudinal case studies of project activity, surveys of actors involved in collaboration, and interviews with key individuals and stakeholders. The work was originally advertised in early 2019 but received no bids. Following a review of the specification and the reasons for a lack of supplier engagement, the work was advertised again in mid 2019 and was awarded to the successful contractor in late 2019. The work will start in early 2020 prior to the first phase of fieldwork over the course of 2020 leading to the first annual report in late 2020.

The RME team have been working with policy colleagues to develop the specification for a midterm evaluation of the suite of schemes offered through the RDP that support the tourism sector in Wales. Using a sectoral approach the evaluation is looking to assess four schemes in particular: The Micro Small Business Fund under Measure 6.4, the Tourism Amenity Investment Scheme under Measure 7.5, and the Regional Tourism Engagement Fund and the Tourism Product Innovation Fund both delivered under Measure 16.3. The decision to take a sectoral approach to the evaluation was done to allow an assessment of how the package of activities work together to support the tourism sector in rural areas rather than treating them as isolated units of support. While the evaluation was expected to commence in mid-2019, this was delayed to allow for revisions to the specification to take into account changes to the schemes and their timetables. The work is now expected to commence in 2020 with an extended date of late 2022. As part of this revision of the specification, the evaluation will now provide both a mid-term and final evaluation over the course of its activity. In its initial stages it is expected that the evaluation will mainly focus on issues of implementation looking at the management of the schemes, the delivery and implementation of projects. The latter half of the evaluation will then focus more on the outputs, outcomes and impact of the schemes and the contributions towards the cross cutting themes. It is expected that the evaluation will employ a variety of research methods including reviewing existing monitoring data, interviews and focus groups with WG delivery staff and grant recipients and a wider survey of scheme beneficiaries. There are known data gaps, particularly in assessing visitor numbers, and the RME team are working to identify ways in which these gaps can be mitigated.

The RME team have developed and commissioned a piece of research looking at the uptake of the Farm Business Grant which offers capital grants to farmers and the role of 'Farming for the Future' workshops, which are mandatory to attend to access the grant, in influencing Farmer motivations to access the grant. The research aims to better understand the reasons behind the uptake and non-uptake of the Farm Business Grant amongst farmers in Wales. In particular the research seeks to identify the reasons why some farmers do not choose to access the scheme and whether this reflects an issue with the design or

implementation of the scheme, broader economic pressures, or whether the Farming for the future workshops are working to encourage farmers to consider whether a grant is the best option. The research was due to take place during 2019 however delays to the commissioning process meant that the research was not awarded until late 2019. The work will primarily consist of a quantitative survey supplemented of both applicants and non-applicants to the farm business grant and will seek to assess the rationale behind their decisions, as well as what actions farmers have taken after accessing the grant or not. This will be supplemented with qualitative work including interviews and focus groups with farmers and stakeholders. It is also planned to speak to farmers who may be interested in the grant but did not attend the workshop but the sampling of this population group does present some challenges. This research will inform any refinements to grant and workshops, as more broadly in developing future support for farmers. This work will be followed by an evaluation later in the programme period.

The RME team have developed the evaluation of LEADER. Working with WG policy colleagues the specification has been developed looking to provide an interim assessment of the delivery of the LEADER approach in Wales in the current programme. In addition, to meet more immediate policy requirements for evidence to inform future CLLD work in Wales, the evaluation will look to assess the longer term contribution of LEADER by using case studies of LEADER projects from previous programmes. In farming the evaluation of LEADER, the RME team are following the guidance from the Evaluation helpdesk and will look to assess the value of LEADER in terms of its contribution to increasing social capital, improving local governance arrangements and its ability to leverage enhanced results and impacts through the projects it funds. Although dependent upon proposals offered from potential bidders to the work it is expected that the evaluation will adopt a theory of change approach principally drawing upon data collected through a case study research design. It is anticipated that the case studies will employ a mixed methods approach utilising interviews with Local action group members, beneficiaries of LEADER funding and broader stakeholders, observations of governance meetings and surveys of wider community stakeholders involved with LEADER. The evaluation was expected to begin in early summer 2019, however this has been delayed and the work is expected to be commissioned in early 2020.

Alongside the scheme level evaluations the RME team worked on the Common Evaluation Questions (CEQs) required for the 2019 enhanced Annual Implementation Report (AIR). The work was advertised in late 2018 and was awarded to a consortium of research organisations familiar with the Wales Rural Development Programme in December 2018. The work began in January 2019 and was completed in May 2019 in time for approval of the report by the Wales Programme Monitoring Committee. Delays to the commencement of the programme in Wales meant that across many parts of the programme, particularly on the socio-economic side, actual delivery was in the relatively early stages and as such there was limited evidence of outputs and outcomes to draw upon at this time. This also translated to a lack of existing evaluation evidence to draw upon in this work. On the agri-environment side, delivery was more progressed, however the successor monitoring and evaluation arrangements to Glastir Monitorign and Evaluation Programme (GMEP) had yet to begun fieldwork which again meant availability of data was limited to the final findings of GMEP in 2017. This created challenges for answering the Common Evaluation Questions (CEQs) required in the AIR, in particular those concerning impacts. A further challenge was that the conditions of data collection for the Farm Business Survey in Wales meant that responses to the survey could not be linked to RDP data sets to identify control and treatment groups to assess RDP impacts on farm businesses. In response to these challenges the AIR work in Wales largely employed qualitative methods, including interviews with WG policy leads, project delivery leads and stakeholders, thematic focus groups around the support to the agricultural sector, the rural economy and rural communities and agri-environment work. This was supplemented with analysis

of monitoring data and the existing evaluation evidence. The evaluators then took a theory based approach to hypothesis about the expected impacts of the programme.

In late 2018 and early 2019 WG Social Researchers from Knowledge and Analytical Services (KAS) carried out an internal review of the Food Business Investment Scheme (FBIS). The aim of the work was to provide an early assessment of effectiveness of FBIS, and the research sought to understand what areas of the scheme were working well and where support could be improved. To do this the review consisted of a online survey of recipients of the scheme which took place between November 2018 to the end of January 2019, telephone interviews with a sample of recipients of the grant undertaken in February and March 2019 and telephone interviews with the WG official involved in the scheme also undertaken in March. The survey was sent to 53 business that had received support and despite repeated attempts to boost response rates and extending survey deadlines 12 responses were received, giving a low response rate of 22 per cent. Interviews were conducted with a sample selected from the larger survey sample, and in total 9 interviews were conducted with beneficiaries. The report was drafted in May and June of 2019 before being published in July 2019 on the Welsh Government Statistics and Research webpage. The key findings of this work are included in a later section.

***1. Preparing and conducting the evaluation of:***

***- thematic issues (including those addressed by sub-programmes).***

Currently, the Evaluation Plan does not specify thematic issues. It continues to be the intention of the RME Team to liaise on an ongoing basis with Programme and scheme managers to identify relevant thematic issues to be captured by evaluations as they arise in the implementation and delivery of the Programme.

***- cross-cutting issues (sustainable development, climate change and innovation).***

The successor to the Glastir Monitoring and Evaluation Programme (GMEP) – the Environment and Natural Resources Monitoring and Modelling Programme (ERAMMP) will provide evidence on the cross-cutting issues of sustainable development and climate change. ERAMMP was commissioned in late 2017. Fieldwork is due to commence in 2020. Evidence on areas of innovation in the Programme will be captured on an ongoing basis in the evaluations named in the evaluation plan. Questions to address the cross cutting issues of sustainable development, climate change and innovation will be included as part of evaluations at scheme and programme levels.

***- the National Rural Networks,***

The approach to evaluating the Wales Rural Network (WRN) remains as in the Evaluation Plan. Towards the end of the Programme period, an evaluation of the WRN will be commissioned. This evaluation will provide an assessment of the outputs, results and impact of the Network. This evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the Evaluation Helpdesk's guidance document on National Rural Network (NRN) Evaluation. Given the interactive nature of the interventions delivered by the WRN, it is crucial that evidence on both the formal and informal associated networks is captured.

The dedicated evaluation of the WRN will be complemented by a suite of other evaluation work. For example, the evaluations undertaken by the LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs) will provide evidence on their networks and their interactions with the WRN. Scheme-level evaluations will capture evidence on the effectiveness of scheme communications activities.



*- the contribution of CLLD strategies to RDP objectives, the added value of LEADER, etc.*

The RME Team continues to provide guidance and support to Local Action Groups (LAGs) on their monitoring and evaluation arrangements. This has included advice and comments on draft specifications sent to the RME team as well as meeting with LAG officials to discuss their plans.

As described above, the RME team has designed the specification for the evaluation of LEADER in Wales which is due to take place in 2020. A key part of this work will be to assess the contribution of CLLD strategies to the objectives of the RDP in Wales and will seek to assess the impact of LEADER. To assist in capturing the longer term impact of LEADER that are likely to go beyond programme cycles the evaluation will look at LEADER projects that have been funded in previous programmes to assess the longer term legacy of the funding. It is expected that the findings will be reported in late 2020.

## **2.c) A description of activities undertaken in relation to the provision and management of data (in relation to section 4 of the evaluation plan)**

Describe activities/problems encountered/solutions in relation to:

### **1. Preparing and running the operations database to collect data and information for evaluation,**

There is a need to manage the next programme period to meet the eCohesion requirement (concerning electronic information exchange with beneficiaries). Work continued during 2019 to maintain the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) IT based system used to manage Structural Funds entitled Programme and Project Monitoring Information System (PPIMS). PPIMS is a tried and tested system possessing features that will meet many of the programme requirements of the current Pillar 2 socio-economic programme and schemes. For the land based elements of the Programme the data will continue to be recorded using the CAPIT system that was used during the 2007-2013 Programme. Enhancements have been made to CAPIT in line with the operations data base requirements for the 2014-2020 Programme.

### **2. Screening data and information sources/providers to ensure the application of robust evaluation methods (including conducting the counterfactual analysis),**

The RME Team has liaised with the WG's Agricultural Statistics team to undertake some pilot analysis, with a view to informing the development of more robust impact evaluation techniques in the WGRC-RDP 2014-2020. It is envisaged that impact evaluation work with non-farm business beneficiaries would utilise business datasets held by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). It is a requirement of the ONS that access to their business datasets is restricted to approved researchers, so it is essential that the commissioning of this impact evaluation work stipulates that the project team must consist of researchers with these approvals in place from the ONS. It is proposed that a theory-based approach would be taken in evaluating the impact of LEADER. The RME Team has continued to meet with LAGs to discuss evaluation approaches.

The RME Team is continuing to liaise with the ERAMMP project team to ensure that Farms surveys carried out as part of the ERAMMP will be able to collect data that will assist in mapping changes in farm behaviour as a result of participation with RDP schemes to help inform future evaluation work. It is hoped that this data will be used to inform the evaluations of Glastir and Farming Connect principally.

The RME Team is also in contact with the ERAMMP project team to discuss their work may be able to support other schemes funded through the RDP such as the Sustainable management scheme.

### **3. Agreements with data providers and necessary arrangements/legal steps to include the identified providers' data in the databases used in the RDP evaluation,**

The WEFO PPIMS system has been extended to allow reporting on the socio-economic aspects of the Rural Programme for 2014-2020. In order to be able to report on the information held within the PPIMS environment Business Objects software has been used in conjunction with other IT solutions. Business objects will allow Programme wide reporting through the amalgamation of high level data held within other data bases, such as PPIMS.

The RME team is working to ensure that schemes include legally correct consent statements for beneficiaries so that where their consent is given their details can be used for monitoring and evaluation purposes. This would also include linking beneficiaries' details to wider datasets as part of a counterfactual evaluation design. The RME Team has produced some guidance in relation GDPR that has been distributed through the Wales Rural Network and outlines the basis for data collection under the RDP.

### **4. Arrangements to fill data gaps and collect missing information.**

The intention is that where data gaps exist, surveys would be used to collect missing information. Beneficiary surveys are included in the Evaluation Plan, as these provide information that complements the monitoring data – how these surveys will be delivered are under review. Rather than doing separate survey contracts it is likely that survey work will be incorporated into scheme level evaluation activity.

Where survey work is not possible it is the intention of the RME team to use more qualitative methods with relevant stakeholders to provide assessments of support offered through the RDP.

2.d) A list of completed evaluations, including references to where they have been published on-line

<b>Publisher/Editor</b>	Welsh Government
<b>Author(s)</b>	AGRA CEAS
<b>Title</b>	AIR 2019 (CEQs)
<b>Abstract</b>	n/a
<b>URL</b>	tbc

<b>Publisher/Editor</b>	Welsh Government
<b>Author(s)</b>	SQW
<b>Title</b>	Evaluation of the Knowledge Transfer, Innovation and Advisory Services Scheme
<b>Abstract</b>	n/a
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://gov.wales/evaluation-knowledge-transfer-innovation-and-advisory-services-programme">https://gov.wales/evaluation-knowledge-transfer-innovation-and-advisory-services-programme</a>

<b>Publisher/Editor</b>	Welsh Government
<b>Author(s)</b>	People and Work
<b>Title</b>	Refugees Employment and Skills Support Study
<b>Abstract</b>	n/a
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://gov.wales/refugees-employment-and-skills-support-study">https://gov.wales/refugees-employment-and-skills-support-study</a>

<b>Publisher/Editor</b>	Welsh Government
<b>Author(s)</b>	Welsh Government
<b>Title</b>	Food Business Investment Scheme: A Review

<b>Abstract</b>	n/a
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://gov.wales/food-business-investment-scheme-review">https://gov.wales/food-business-investment-scheme-review</a>

## 2.e) A summary of completed evaluations, focussing on evaluation findings

**The Common Evaluation Question (CEQ) work which formed part of the 2019 AIR was completed in May 2019.**

A summary of findings broken down by Priority are as follows:

Priority 1:

- Innovation is happening, but largely at a farm level. Evidence of innovation at a sectoral level is less apparent;
- Significant emphasis of programme on supporting collaboration, both vertically and horizontally;
- Farming Connect and food skills projects are supporting lifelong learning.

Priority 2:

- Considerable evidence that Farming Connect is likely to improve economic performance of farms;
- Evidence if impact limited to date, stakeholders say Farming Connect is having a positive contribution;
- Use of Farming Connect as gateway for accessing grant funding (such as the Farm Business Grant) appears to be beneficial.

Priority 3:

- Suite of schemes supporting the food processing sectors, including FBIS to provide capital grants, and food centres to promote innovation and product development;
- Farming Connect also contributes, however co-operation activity through Farming Connect tends to focus on horizontal dimension (producer to producer) rather than vertical (producer and processor).

Priority 4:

- Modelling work suggest positive effects for plant species biodiversity and small number of indicators are higher for 'in scheme' farms but likely to reflect historic, rather than current, support;
- Small but positive effects in reductions in on-farm and national sediment loads expected in current programme. It was found that water management projects were not optimally located in location of greatest need and there was the potential of missed opportunities to address local water quality issues due to the lack of local scale data;
- No significant differences in indicators relating to soil erosion and soil management, however surveys suggest in scheme farms are more likely to uptake activities associated with better soil management.

Priority 5:

- Agri-environment options are expected to lead to reductions in GHG/ammonia from agriculture. Impact currently not known but likely to lead to similar reductions in previous programme of 1.4%-1.8% as similar activity is taking place;

- Magnitude of carbon conservation and sequestration expected to be minimal due to scale of work and likely to be negligible against broader context of GHG emissions from Welsh agriculture.

#### Priority 6:

- Research suggests that positive outcomes are being delivered to support diversification as well as the creation and development of small enterprises but too early to tell the impact of delivery to date;
- LEADER is providing support for local development but rule changes around state aid are likely to limit the role of the private sector;
- Accessibility and use of ICT in rural areas mainly seems to focus on ICT in farming community rather than rural community more broadly.

#### Programme wide:

- Structure of programme is complex – while this presented problems for evaluation it is not necessarily a problem for beneficiaries;
- Common issues around application process across a number of schemes relating to the two stage approach and the burden on beneficiaries;
- Currently a lack of evidence to assess the impact of the programme, evaluations need to be put in place to build evidence base.

### **Evaluation of the Knowledge Transfer, Innovation and Advisory Services Programme**

An evaluation of the Knowledge Transfer, Innovation and Advisory Services Programme, otherwise known as Farming Connect has finished its phase of fieldwork, the findings of which were reported in the first annual report which was completed in late 2019. This work was due to be published in late 2019 however limitations on publication due to the general election meant this has been delayed to early 2020.

Due to the methodology used it was not possible for the research to provide robust assessments of the impact of the programme, however the findings do help in assessing the engagement of farmers with the programme, what elements of the programme seem to be working well and where there are opportunities to modify programme delivery. The findings, as presented in the report, are provided below:

- The programme has performed well in terms of engagement and the longevity and continuity of Farming Connect has been important in it being seen as ‘well known’, ‘trusted’ and ‘well respected’ in the sector in Wales;
- Engagement across activities varied, although the majority of farmers did not take advantage of the full range of activities offered under Farming Connect suggesting that navigating the full Farming Connect offer was an issue for some farmers;
- The range of support offered through Farming Connect works well and the flexibility of the programme was seen as positive. The report has noted some delivery challenges including variability in the quality and consistency of facilitators, the capacity of development officers, and the managing the use of time limited support;
- The report found that Farming Connect plays a crucial role in creating the ‘foundations for change’ and has a substantial effect on personal outcomes for farmers in terms of their mind set, attitude, confidence and ambition as well as a positive impact on their mental health;

- In terms of impact, the findings suggest that the support is leading to small scale incremental changes over a period of time. In part, this reflects capacity and resource constraints in some farm businesses which mean that changes need to be affordable and manageable;
- The evaluators suggest that Farming Connect is delivering outcomes that would not have been achieved otherwise, would have taken longer, been lower quality or less sustainable in the absence of the programme.

### **Refugees Employment and Skills Support Study**

The fieldwork for the Refugees Employment and skills support study was completed in early 2019 with the final report provided to the WG in late 2019. This work was due to be published in late 2019 however limitations on publication due to the general election meant this has been delayed to early 2020.

The findings of the work are as follows:

- In terms of work aspirations, around two thirds of those surveyed who had worked in their home country wanted to continue in the same occupation they held before seeking asylum however 80 of those spoken to were willing to consider alternatives;
- Skills and qualifications vary substantially reflecting diversity of the refugee and asylum seeker population. Findings suggest that levels of education tended to be lower amongst refugees resettled under the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme. Participation in English language provision was high (65%) however participating in other types of training was more limited;
- With regards to experience of work, 40% of those interviewed who were interviewed were entitled to work. This figures does conceal differences in gender (men are more likely to be in work), skill level (those with higher skills are more likely to be in work), and length of time in the UK (those in the UK longer are more likely to be employed).

In relation to barriers to employment, a key barrier was a misalignment between the labour aspirations and skills of refugees and the expectations of employers. Even where aspirations were aligned, barriers linked to enforced migration such as difficulties gaining recognition of qualifications, skills and experience gained overseas, reluctance among employers to employ refugee and poor mental health. There were also more generic barriers linked to transport, childcare and weakness of labour markets – these more generic barriers were seen to be more pervasive in rural areas.

### **Review of the Food Business Investment Scheme**

The fieldwork for this work was undertaken by Government Social researchers within the Welsh Government. The findings are based upon a limited sample of responses (12 survey responses and 7 interviews) so caution is required when interpreting the findings. The main findings arising from this work are as follows:

- Overall perceptions of the food business scheme were positive, and recipients spoken to believed the scheme filled a gap as there was a lack of suitable funding alternatives;
- Recipients of the grant reported positive experiences of the support offered by Welsh Government, and reported that having a single liaison person worked well;

- Those spoken to as part of the research, a limited sample, had all delivered what they expected to achieve, and four key areas of impact were mentioned: employment, training, turnover and environmental sustainability;
- In terms of areas of improvement in the scheme, respondents reported that application process was time consuming and that the time taken to award the grant was too long. Similarly respondents reported that the claims process was challenging and delays in receiving claims was problematic. Some respondents said communication with Welsh Government was sometime inconsistent between teams.

**2.f) A description of communication activities undertaken in relation to publicising evaluation findings (in relation to section 6 of the evaluation plan)**

No communication activities defined



**2.g) Description of the follow-up given to evaluation results (in relation to section 6 of the evaluation plan)**

Reference shall be made to the evaluation plan, any difficulties encountered in implementation shall be described, together with solutions adopted or proposed.

<p><b>Evaluation result relevant for follow-up (Describe finding &amp; mention source in brackets)</b></p>	<p>Evaluation of the Knowledge Transfer, Innovation and advisory services programme: • Engagement across activities varied, although the majority of farmers did not take advantage of the full range of activities offered under Farming Connect suggesting that navigating the full offer was an issue for some farmers • The range of support offered through Farming Connect works well and the flexibility of the programme was seen as positive. The report has noted some delivery challenges including variab</p>
<p><b>Follow-up carried out</b></p>	<p>Findings from the first phase of the Evaluation of the Knowledge Transfer, innovation and advisory services programme have informed the programme refresh of farming connect which addresses the recommendations made in the report. More details on this refresh can be found in the update under priority 1 of section 1c.</p>
<p><b>Responsible authority for follow-up</b></p>	<p>Other</p>

<p><b>Evaluation result relevant for follow-up (Describe finding &amp; mention source in brackets)</b></p>	<p>CEQ evaluation Work 2019: • Structure of programme is complex – while this presented problems for evaluation it is not necessarily a problem for beneficiaries. • Common issues around application process across a number of schemes relating to the two stage approach and the burden on beneficiaries. • Currently a lack of evidence to assess the impact of the programme, evaluations need to be put in place to build evidence base.</p>
<p><b>Follow-up carried out</b></p>	<p>Although no changes have been made to the 2 stage application process, staff in RPW and SMU have actively been looking at ways of improving and streamlining the appraisal and claims process. With regards to the complexity and structure of the programme the evaluators noted that while this may create challenges for evaluation it does not necessarily mean that there are issues on the customer side. It is therefore the case that more research is needed to assess this and it will be looked at as part of scheme level evaluation work. The CEQ work found Evaluation evidence limited which hindered their ability to assess the impact of the programme. This is accepted, however it is noted that this paucity of evidence is somewhat due to the timing of the work at which point assessments of impact were tricky due to the level of delivery to date. Evaluation activity is planned across the programme, with individual evaluations for each scheme expected. Progress of this is outlined above.</p>
<p><b>Responsible authority for follow-up</b></p>	<p>Managing authority</p>

### 3. ISSUES WHICH AFFECT THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PROGRAMME AND THE MEASURES TAKEN

#### 3.a) Description of steps taken to ensure quality and effectiveness of programme implementation

##### **Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC)**

The WG has established a single Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) for Wales European Structural and Investment (ESI) Fund programmes. The All Wales ESI PMC was officially constituted on 5 December 2014 following approval of the Structural Funds programmes and was formally established for the WGRC-RDP 2014-2020 in May 2015 following EC approval of the Programme. During 2019 the PMC met three times in total; on 18 January, 03 June and 18 October.

##### **Error Rates**

With regard to error rates for the Programme, the final figures for the analysis of the control statistics shows an decrease in error in the random sample for area based measures at 1.86% (down from 3.25% in the previous year). The WG undertook a detailed analysis of the errors as follows:

82 Cases (for a value of € 389, 275.62) were inspected randomly and a total of € 7,234.04 error was found, leading to the 1.86% error rate. Of those, cases inspected, six had an error of over €100, five of which were Measure 10 and one which was Measure 11. Two Measure 10 cases had an error of over €1,000, for a total error of € 5,965.75. Those cases are presented in more detail below.

##### Case 1

Claim in Year: € 43,881.67

Reduction in year: € 4,120.78

The beneficiary holds an entry (lower level) and advanced (higher level) Glastir (AEM) agreement that commenced in 2014. The inspection identified a non-compliance with contractual commitments as the area minimum area for Wildlife Cover Crops had not been respected. Using the Welsh Government's Penalty matrix these breaches amounted €4,120.78 penalty for the Entry and Advanced annual payment.

##### Case 2

Claim in Year: € 12,815.41

Reduction in year: € 1,844.97

The beneficiary holds an entry (lower level) and advanced (higher level) Glastir (AEM) agreement that commenced in 2014. The inspection identified two separate non-compliances with contractual commitments that affected two of the 45 land parcels subject to the agreement. The non-compliances were for topping crops on fields where topping was prohibited under the contract. Using the Welsh Government's Penalty matrix these breaches amounted to a €1,844.97 penalty that is applied to the Entry and Advanced annual payment.

In addition to continuing to implement the remedial action plan on the root causes of error for Rural Development Programmes, the WG increased the rate of On The Spot Checks (OTSCs) for the Integrated Agricultural Control System (IACS) Rural Development measures in the 2019 campaign.

The error rate in the random sample for investment measures reduced again to 0.18% (previous year 0.35%). The Welsh Government has continued to communicate with farmers via farm outreach services to improve their understanding of Agri Environment Scheme rules and to minimise irregularities.

In the 2018 Certification Report errors in the calculation of some beneficiaries SCO's were identified. An exercise to reverify all cases to assess and correct the error was completed in 2019.

### **Aid Recovered**

The WG's Rural Payments Division (RPD) has a well established Debt Registration and management process in place. All overpayments are pursued on discovery and reimbursement of the account is made within a set time-scale.

All current RDP schemes are subject to a strict Control framework. The aid recovered and reallocated during 2019 under Article 56 of Regulation (EC) No 1306/2013 is summarised in the following table:

#### **New RDP Aid Recovered and reallocated during 2019 Calender Year**

<b>Sub Measure</b>	<b>Focus Area</b>	<b>Value (€)</b>	<b>Value (£)</b>
2.1	P4	-1,673.88	-1,489.30
<i>2.1 Total</i>		<i>-1,673.88</i>	<i>-1,489.30</i>
4.1	2a	-32,161.08	-28,209.94
4.1	5b	-846.88	-754.87
<i>4.1 Total</i>		<i>-33,007.96</i>	<i>-28,964.81</i>
4.2	3a	-22,639.11	-20,446.49
<i>4.2 Total</i>		<i>-22,639.11</i>	<i>-20,446.49</i>
4.4	5d	-609.65	-533.36
4.4	5e	-4,083.81	-3,507.44
4.4	P4	-201,860.74	-172,254.07
<i>4.4 Total</i>		<i>-206,554.20</i>	<i>-176,294.87</i>
7.4	6b	-889.01	-760.59
<i>7.4 Total</i>		<i>-889.01</i>	<i>-760.59</i>
7.5	6b	-504.36	-455.30
<i>7.5 Total</i>		<i>-504.36</i>	<i>-455.30</i>

8.1	5e	-573.24	-501.23
8.1	P4	-10,510.82	-8,990.72
<i>8.1 Total</i>		<i>-11,084.06</i>	<i>-9,491.95</i>
8.5	P4	-29,337.88	-24,615.06
<i>8.5 Total</i>		<i>-29,337.88</i>	<i>-24,615.06</i>
10.1	5d	-4,902.72	-4,306.17
10.1	5e	-4,514.09	-3,941.03
10.1	P4	-291,635.48	-244,549.45
<i>10.1 Total</i>		<i>-301,052.29</i>	<i>-252,796.65</i>
11.1	P4	-19,945.05	-17,085.22
<i>11.1 Total</i>		<i>-19,945.05</i>	<i>-17,085.22</i>
11.2	P4	-68,851.99	-58,076.95
<i>11.2 Total</i>		<i>-68,851.99</i>	<i>-58,076.95</i>
16.2	6b	-5,970.66	-5,250.00
<i>16.2 Total</i>		<i>-5,970.66</i>	<i>-5,250.00</i>
16.4	3a	-3,980.77	-3,497.94
<i>16.4 Total</i>		<i>-3,980.77</i>	<i>-3,497.94</i>
19.4	6b	-4,459.04	-3,911.24
<i>19.4 Total</i>		<i>-4,459.04</i>	<i>-3,911.24</i>
20.1	zz	-2,657,649.42	2,349,380.53
<i>20.1 Total</i>		<i>-2,657,649.42</i>	<i>2,349,380.53</i>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>-3,367,599.68</b>	<b>2,952,516.90</b>

*Notes: Total of New RDP (14-20) recovered debts only. All debt recoveries from 01/01/2019 to 31/12/2019.*

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**3.b) Quality and efficient delivery mechanisms**

Simplified Cost Options (SCOs) <sup>1</sup>, proxy automatically calculated

	Total RDP financial allocation [EAFRD]	[%] planned SCO coverage out of the total RDP allocation <sup>2</sup>	[%] realised expenditure through SCO out of total RDP allocation (cumulative <sup>3</sup> )
Fund specific methods CPR Article 67(5)(e)	651,590,163.00	36.03	19.86

<sup>1</sup> Simplified Cost Options shall be intended as unit cost/flat rates/lumps sums CPR Article 67(5) including the EAFRD specific methods under point (e) of that article such as business start-up lump sums, flat rate payments to producers organisations and area and animal related unit costs.

<sup>2</sup> Automatically calculated from programme version's measures 06, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18

<sup>3</sup> Automatically calculated from declarations of expenditure's measures 06, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18

Simplified Cost Options (SCOs), based on specific detailed MS data [optional]

	Total RDP financial allocation [EAFRD]	[%] planned SCO coverage out of the total RDP allocation	[%] realised expenditure through SCO out of total RDP allocation (cumulative)
Total CPR Article 67(1)(b)(c)(d) + 67(5)(e)	651,590,163.00		
Fund specific methods CPR Article 67(5)(e)	651,590,163.00		

E-management for beneficiaries [optional]

	[%] EAFRD funding	[%] Operations concerned
Application for support		
Payment claims		
Controls and compliance		
Monitoring and reporting to the MA/PA		

Average time limits for beneficiaries to receive payments [optional]

[Days] Where applicable, MS deadline for payments to beneficiaries	[Days] Average time for payments to beneficiaries	Comments

## **4. STEPS TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND PROGRAMME PUBLICITY REQUIREMENTS**

### **4.a) Action taken and state of play as regards the establishment of the NRN and the implementation of its action plan**

4.a1) Actions taken and state of play as regards establishment of the NRN (governance structure and network support unit)

#### **GOVERNANCE**

The Wales Rural Network (WRN) is a partnership of organisations, enterprises, administrations, and individuals open to any stakeholder with an interest in rural development. Stakeholders are involved in the governance and activities of the WRN through the external Steering Group (see below).

#### **WALES RURAL NETWORK SUPPORT UNIT (WRNSU)**

The role of the WRNSU is to facilitate the networking process and the engagement of stakeholders by sharing information, best practice and expertise across Wales, UK and Europe. The WRNSU currently comprises of a Head of WRN (0.5FTE) supported by three Rural Network Managers (2.5FTE), a Finance Manager (0.8FTE) and a Website Manager & Content Author (1FTE). The team works alongside RDP scheme managers and delivery bodies to identify networking opportunities and to support the wider WRN.

The WRNSU remit is to:

Communicate, share and exchange information and news;

- Organise and promote free events and study visits encouraging co-operation and sharing of knowledge;
- Showcase funded project examples and case studies;
- Communicate and promote funding opportunities;
- Connect businesses, community groups, and others interested in Rural Development
- Share best practices and EU supporting information;
- Facilitate links within the UK and Europe.

As we are nearing the end of the programme period, the WRNSU role has shifted, there is greater emphasis on learning from best practice and the promotion of the projects that have received RDP funding. Further information on our work can be found on the WRN web pages; [www.businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork](http://www.businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork) \_

#### **WALES RURAL NETWORK STEERING GROUP (WRNSG)**

The WRNSG is specifically tasked with advising and assisting with the development of a work-plan for WRNSU, which involves stakeholders, improves the quality of RDP implementation, informs the broader public and potential beneficiaries about the RDP, and fosters innovation.

A sub-group of members met in February to discuss the remit for the steering group for 2019.

The steering group concluded that the WRNSU 2019 work plan should focus on the following:

- Continued development of the website as a priority
- Continued engagement with stakeholders
- Increase the video/ YouTube library
- Promote and share good practices across the Wales RDP Programme.

Further information on the Steering Group can be found at

<https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/wrn-support-unit/steering-group>

#### 4.a2) Actions taken and state of play as regards the implementation of the action plan

- **COLLECTIONS OF EXAMPLES OF PROJECTS (ART. 54 3B(I) OF REG. 1305/2013)**

Launched in December 2018 the new WRN web pages promote all the RDP socio – economic measure approved projects. For a current list of all approved 2014-2020 RDP Socio-economic projects see: [https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/projects?funding\\_source=All&year%5Bmin%5D=All&year%5Bmax%5D=&area=All&theme=All&measures=All](https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/projects?funding_source=All&year%5Bmin%5D=All&year%5Bmax%5D=&area=All&theme=All&measures=All)

LEADER projects are available via an interactive map. All LEADER groups in Wales have been issued with a profile for the website and must upload the project details once it has been approved by the Local Action Group (LAG). The projects can be viewed by themes and/or areas. The projects also provide contact details, further information and a link to a case study if applicable. <https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/local-action-groups-and-projects>

All other RDP projects are also available on the website and appear on a separate interactive map. These projects can also be viewed online using the search box.

A total of 1,200 RDP funded projects are currently available to view.

Our dedicated WRN Website Manager and Content Author regularly updates the website with news, events, publications and case studies concerning RDP.

<https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/news-events-and-case-studies>.

- **FACILITATION OF THEMATIC AND ANALYTICAL EXCHANGES (ART. 54 3B(II) OF REG. 1305/2013)**

See section 4b for information on publications, website and social media strategy.

- **PROVISION OF TRAINING AND NETWORKING TO LAG (ART. 54 3B(III) OF REG. 1305/2013)**

The WRNSU managers have responsibility for LAGs on a geographical basis and have successfully organised a number of events to support and promote the RDP 2014-2020.

These have included:

March – LEADER Co-operation Workshop – Glasgow – jointly organised between WRN/SRN

- September - UK Rural policy exchange workshop with other devolved administrations
- Oct – Two Timber Passporting and Plant Health Workshops
- Oct – PMC Study Visits
- Nov – UKNRN Study Visits
- Nov – Supply Chains Workshop
- Nov – Women in Entrepreneurship Workshop

The WRNSU have also had representation at the following:

- 13th NRN Meeting – Athlone, Ireland
- Welsh food themed evening as part of Co-operation conference – Glasgow, Scotland
- ENRD conference – NetworX - Brussels
- UKNRN Meeting - Birmingham
- 15th NRN Meeting – Poitiers, France
- Desk Officers project visits – part of PMC meeting
- Smart Villages Workshop, organised by SRN. Exemplar Welsh project was showcased by WRN at this event.
- Pembrokeshire Funding Fair
- UKNRN Meeting – North Wales
- Vale of Glamorgan Future Farming and Food Event
- RDP Officers meetings – South West Wales
- RDP Officers meetings – South East Wales

- **PROVISION OF NETWORKING FOR ADVISERS AND INNOVATION SUPPORT SERVICES (ART. 54 3B(IV) OF REG. 1305/2013)**

WRNSU work closely with policy leads to promote and disseminate information to advisors. Lead officers within the WRNSU have been identified for RDP schemes. Dividing responsibility for networking and communications in this way improves the overall service provided to stakeholders as well as developing WRNSU managers' knowledge of the programme. This knowledge is built up by regular communications and attending meetings with the scheme leads.

In November 2019 WRNSU were invited to present a best practice case study at the third Smart Village Network meeting in Scotland. We took along representatives from the Cyd Ynni project to give a presentation. See link [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15BNin0wy3M&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15BNin0wy3M&feature=emb_logo)



This meeting covered:

- Supporting cooperation between villages and village groups/associations on the concept of smart villages
- Providing an update on the state-of-play of Smart Village Network activities;
- Action Planning on ‘What the SVN and its members can do to make smart villages happen in Member States’
- Planning Future cooperation activities of the network and next steps.
- Supporting exchange of experience, cooperation – getting to know the specificities of rural areas in other countries and their “smart solutions”

As part of improving communications of innovation support services we have launched EIP and Smart Villages pages on our website to promote project case studies. <https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/innovation>

See also section 4b

- **SHARING AND DISSEMINATION OF M&E FINDINGS (ART. 54 3B(V) OF REG. 1305/2013)**

WRNSU actively participate in all UKNRN meetings and work closely with other NRNs to ensure agreed processes and sharing of information/best practice.

The UKNRN is specifically tasked with working across the UK regional administrations to develop the following areas:

Stimulate closer NSU relations and increase understanding and awareness of activities occurring;

- Share best practice approaches to networking & communicating with stakeholders, this will include:
  - The development of effective case studies;
  - The use of digital communications including, i.e. producing short films, social media, etc.

Engage with stakeholders/beneficiaries through thematic events to enable:

- Stakeholders to influence the implementation of RDPs;
- Facilitate the sharing of good practice and innovation through use of workshops, conferences, open space groups, etc. to support the development and resilience of rural communities.
- Facilitate the opportunities for networking and communications with stakeholders;
- Facilitating Cooperation & Innovation through the following:
  - Share information regarding projects to enable innovation between regions;
  - Hold regional cooperation events across UK NSUs with Operational Groups to encourage sharing of projects ideas;
- Share best practice concerning Finance & Audit / Monitoring and Evaluation

The UKNRN group met on three occasions during 2019 to facilitate and implement the objectives above.

In addition, Wales attended The European Evaluation Helpdesk - Yearly Capacity Building Event for UK on assessing RDP achievements and impacts in 2019. Event included presentations, interactive sessions and workshops and was attended by regional NRNs and MAs.

Information and findings are also shared via the WRNSU newsletter and Website see section 4b and <https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/wrn-support-unit/evaluation-and-research>

- **THE NETWORK COMMUNICATION PLAN (ART. 54 3B(VI) OF REG. 1305/2013)\*** *\*this point could be treated under following section 4b of the AIR*

Please refer to Section 4b below for information on the Communication Plan for the WGRC-RDP2014-2020.

- **ACTIVITIES REGARDING THE PARTICIPATION IN AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE ENRD (ART. 54 3B(VII) OF REG. 1305/2013)**

WRNSU has been very active in participating and contributing to ENRD activities in order to improve the quality of RDP implementation. Events attended in 2019 include:

13th NRN Workshop on Generational Renewal, organised by ENRD – Athlone, Ireland; 22nd February 2019

- ENRD Network X Conference; Brussels; 10th – 11 April 2019
- 15th NRN Workshop Connecting Rural Europe, organised by ENRD, Poitiers, France, 19–20 September 2019

#### **4.b) Steps taken to ensure that the programme is publicised (Article 13 of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014)**

##### **WRN Communications/Work Plan**

The Network's primary objectives are to:

- Bring together rural stakeholders with an interest in the development and delivery of the Rural Development Programme;
- Communicate the opportunities available within the Programme to the target audience.

Feedback from external evaluators, governing bodies and customers indicated that the lack of an easily accessible and media orientated website was affecting:-

- The visibility and potential of WRN
- How the importance of EU funding to the Welsh economy is perceived
- Wales' standing in comparison with other member states.

Following the WG decision to move all content to a black and white beta.gov website the WRN procured the build of a purpose built Network website on the Business Wales platform.

The new WRN website platform went live in December 2018. The new website includes:

- A dynamic home page with a headline slide show
- TAGs for Agriculture; Community; Food; Tourism; Environment & Forestry
- Case Study Videos
- An interactive map depicting all project locations across Wales
- All LAG Projects and contact pages
- All Socio-Economic Projects
- All Tourism and Agriculture Projects
- News pages – circa. 2 news stories a day are added; including information around scheme windows
- Case study pages
- Newsletter page where the previous 3 issues are hosted
- Social Media Feeds
- Events

From the Website Analytics received, the number of website hits continues to grow month on month.

	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>Difference 2018-2019</b>
<b>No of Website Visits</b>	9292	21954	12662
<b>No of views to all Webpages</b>	26248	105248	79000
<b>No of Twitter Followers</b>	1412	1617	205
<b>Tweets</b>	741	592	-149
<b>Engagement</b>	791	735	-56
<b>Profile visits</b>	888	4109	3221
<b>No of Facebook Followers</b>	134	239	105
<b>Posts</b>	578	864	286
<b>Engagement</b>	769	720	-49
<b>Profile visits</b>	927	785	-142

<https://twitter.com/WalesRuralNet> and <https://www.facebook.com/walesruralnet>

WRNSU have entered four case studies into the ENRD Rural Inspiration Awards to showcase best practice in climate change mitigation and adaptation in Wales.

### **Publications**

The WRNSU produces its own newsletter as well as contributing to other publications. These include:

- WRNSU e-newsletter provides information regarding schemes, EOI window dates, news stories and case studies from Wales, UK, Europe and beyond. The newsletter currently has 6,900 subscribers to the English version and a further 343 to the Welsh version (12 published in 2019) <https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/wrn-support-unit/newsletter>
- Natural Resources e-Bulletin: Includes the latest legislative and policy updates on the WG's commitment to our climate, energy, waste, water and land in ways that will protect our natural environment for future generations. WRN feed in relevant stories/schemes. (two issues) NR Bulletin has 12,068 subscribers  
<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKWALES/bulletins/21d0672>
- Gwlad e-newsletter is WG's fortnightly e-newsletter for farm and forestry businesses and all those involved with agriculture in Wales. Including details on schemes and news stories that target this sector. Gwlad magazine has 10,191 subscribers to the English version and a further 647 to the Welsh version. (Two publications and 21 newsletters)

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKWALES/bulletins/27f657a>

### WRNSU Communications & Publicity

- WRNSU Newsletter – 11 editions in 2019; the subscribers continue to steadily grow each month with a 9% increase in readership in 2019 to over 7,000 subscribers across the English and Welsh versions.
- Regular updates around scheme windows provided to EU Funds & Natural Resources newsletters.
- WRN approve all press releases and provide external communication support to beneficiaries.
- Approximately 10 stories per week added to the website news page.
- Social Media – Twitter followers increased in 2019 by roughly 400 to 1400; Facebook has increased at a slower pace to 230 followers. Regular tweets / Facebook posts; re-tweets with quotes and promotional tweets / Facebook posts regarding scheme windows scheduled on a regular basis while Expression Of Interest windows are open.
  - A competition is being considered to increase Facebook followers
  - Business cases are being produced for a WRN Instagram account and a WRN YouTube channel
- Creation of additional video case studies for use on WRNSU website (late 2019)
- Regular updates to the website of written case studies.

### Videos

The WRNSU produced two videos (duplicated in Welsh/English) to provide an overview of the RDP programme as part of its evaluation and advocacy. They explain in simple, powerful, terms the value of the RDP to organisations, communities and individuals including improving productivity and the impact it has on people's lives. Separate films were produced for the following themed areas of the programme:

- EIP Wales
- Rural Community Development Fund & Co-operation and Supply Chain Development Scheme.

These films can be viewed on the video case study and innovation pages on the WRN website - <https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/news-events-and-case-studies/video-case-studies?page=3> & <https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/innovation>

### **Raising the Profile with Welsh Ministers**

The WRNSU along with the MA and scheme leads ensure that the Welsh Ministers are kept up to date with EAFRD funding. Funded projects are highlighted to Welsh Ministers at every opportunity.

Regular social media updates on RDP activity are publicised by our ministers.

### **Working with UK National Rural Network**

The UK NRN support units (England, Scotland, Northern Ireland & Wales) meet face to face biannually. This enhances cross working, sharing of best practice, identifying common challenges and barriers and therefore improving working practices. Monthly UKNRN teleconferences are held. This facilitates the sharing of information. This ensures that information, publicity and communication guidelines are interpreted consistently across the UK and each Support Unit is aware of the latest developments in the adjoining administrations.

Examples of this are:

The Rural Networks of Wales, Ireland, Scotland and Northern Ireland brought together over 60 participants in a unique, collaborative LEADER Cooperation workshop in Glasgow in March.  
<https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/news-events-and-case-studies/event/uk-ireland-cooperation-conference-2021-march-2019-glasgow>

- Ongoing participation in UKNRN Biannual meetings and monthly teleconference catch-ups. These meetings provide an excellent opportunity to discuss RDP stakeholder issues and agree consistent responses to issues affecting the UK as a whole.
- The June UKNRN meeting met in Birmingham. It was decided to include project visits as part of these meetings going forward, and to alternate location between the UK administrations.
- The first of the new format meetings met in North Wales in November. WRNSU organised LEADER project visits and a meeting venue.

### **Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015)**

The WRNSU as part of the WG, is obliged to embed the Well-being of Future Generations Act in all aspects of WRNSU work. The Act requires Welsh public bodies to think more about the long-term, to work better with people, communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach – helping us to create a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future.

## **5. ACTIONS TAKEN TO FULFIL EX ANTE CONDITIONALITIES**

This section applies to AIR(s) 2015, 2016 only

## **6. DESCRIPTION OF IMPLEMENTATION OF SUB-PROGRAMMES**

This section applies to AIR(s) 2016, 2018 only

## **7. ASSESSMENT OF THE INFORMATION AND PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME**

This section applies to AIR(s) 2016, 2018 only



**8. IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIONS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE PRINCIPLES SET OUT IN ARTICLES 5, 7 AND 8 OF REGULATION (EU) No 1303/2013**

This section applies to AIR(s) 2016, 2018 only



## **9. PROGRESS MADE IN ENSURING INTEGRATED APPROACH TO USE EAFRD AND OTHER UNION FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS**

This section applies to AIR(s) 2018 only

**10. REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS (ARTICLE 46 OF REGULATION (EU) No 1303/2013)**

30A. Has the ex-ante assessment been started ?	No
30B. Has the ex-ante assessment been completed ?	No
30. Date of completion of ex-ante assessment	-
31.1. Has selection or designation process already been launched ?	No
13A. Has the funding agreement been signed ?	No
13. Date of signature of the funding agreement with the body implementing the financial instrument	-

## **11. ENCODING TABLES FOR COMMON AND PROGRAMME-SPECIFIC INDICATORS AND QUANTIFIED TARGET VALUES**

See Monitoring Annex

## Annex II

Detailed table showing implementation level by Focus areas including output indicators

Focus Area 1A							
FA/M	Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2023
1A	T1: percentage of expenditure under Articles 14, 15 and 35 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 in relation to the total expenditure for the RDP (focus area 1A)	2014-2019			6.74	23.76	28.37
		2014-2018			3.76	13.25	
		2014-2017			1.19	4.19	
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					

Focus Area 1B							
FA/M	Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2023
1B	T2: Total number of cooperation operations supported under the cooperation measure (Article 35 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013) (groups, networks/clusters, pilot projects...) (focus area 1B)	2014-2019			173.00	36.19	478.00
		2014-2018			60.00	12.55	
		2014-2017			2.00	0.42	
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					

Focus Area 1C							
FA/M	Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2023
1C	T3: Total number of participants trained under Article 14 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 (focus area 1C)	2014-2019			14,406.00	41.50	34,716.00
		2014-2018			10,079.00	29.03	
		2014-2017			5,021.00	14.46	
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					

Focus Area 2A							
FA/M	Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2023
2A	T4: percentage of agricultural holdings with RDP support for investments in restructuring or modernisation (focus area 2A)	2014-2019	7.56	75.01	6.35	63.00	10.08
		2014-2018	2.99	29.67	1.47	14.59	
		2014-2017	0.29	2.88	0.07	0.69	
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					
FA/M	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
2A	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	56,955,540.60	53.47	42,118,797.42	39.54	106,518,333.17
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	22,435,463.39	66.69	18,330,833.52	54.49	33,641,808.11
M01.1	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019			2,896,442.72	75.61	3,830,684.80
M01.1	O12 - Number of participants in trainings	2014-2019			11,093.00	110.82	10,010.00
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	3,885,075.84	60.02	3,076,774.35	47.53	6,473,423.63
M02.1	O13 - Number of beneficiaries advised	2014-2019			2,482.00	83.77	2,963.00
M04	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	30,016,251.37	63.36	20,631,371.67	43.55	47,374,830.90
M04	O2 - Total investment	2014-2019			53,415,408.74	45.20	118,172,371.35
M04.1	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019			20,631,371.67	43.71	47,198,360.31
M04.1	O4 - Number of holdings/beneficiaries supported	2014-2019			1,532.00	63.02	2,431.00
M04.3	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019					176,470.59
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	618,750.00	3.25	79,817.88	0.42	19,028,270.53

Focus Area 2B							
FA/M	Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2023
2B	T5: percentage of agricultural holdings with RDP supported business development plan/investments for young farmers (focus area 2B)	2014-2019					0.73
		2014-2018					
		2014-2017					
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					
FA/M	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
2B	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	2,852,715.01				
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	2,240,943.91				
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	611,771.10				

**Focus Area 3A**

FA/M	Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2023
3A	T6: percentage of agricultural holdings receiving support for participating in quality schemes, local markets and short supply circuits, and producer groups/organisations (focus area 3A)	2014-2019	0.60	87.71	0.42	61.40	0.68
		2014-2018	2.11	308.44	0.41	59.93	
		2014-2017					
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					
FA/M	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
3A	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	103,838,704.11	61.38	46,603,122.68	27.55	169,163,436.09
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	53,169,047.69	85.19	13,385,239.41	21.45	62,413,793.70
M01.1	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019			12,383,006.25	20.48	60,478,006.48
M01.1	O12 - Number of participants in trainings	2014-2019			720.00	4.24	16,996.00
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	255,021.34	38.47	315,081.82	47.53	662,921.01
M02.1	O13 - Number of beneficiaries advised	2014-2019			254.00	83.83	303.00
M04	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	46,732,268.76	77.99	30,146,853.03	50.31	59,917,712.73
M04	O2 - Total investment	2014-2019			62,202,686.07	41.53	149,794,281.83
M04.1	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2019			80.00	66.67	120.00
M04.2							
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	3,682,366.32	7.98	2,755,948.42	5.97	46,169,008.65
M16.4	O9 - Number of holdings participating in supported schemes	2014-2019			102.00	61.82	165.00



**Priority P4**

FA/M	Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2023	
P4	T13: percentage of forestry land under management contracts to improve soil management and/or prevent soil erosion (focus area 4C)	2014-2019					0.00	
		2014-2018						
		2014-2017						
		2014-2016						
		2014-2015						
	T11: percentage of forestry land under management contracts to improve water management (focus area 4B)	2014-2019						0.00
		2014-2018						
		2014-2017						
		2014-2016						
		2014-2015						
	T8: percentage of forest/other wooded area under management contracts supporting biodiversity (focus area 4A)	2014-2019				0.83	30.73	2.70
		2014-2018				0.75	27.77	
		2014-2017				0.23	8.52	
		2014-2016				0.20	7.41	
		2014-2015				0.01	0.37	
	T12: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts to improve soil management and/or prevent soil erosion (focus area 4C)	2014-2019				4.46	89.46	4.99
		2014-2018				4.46	89.46	
		2014-2017				4.46	89.46	
		2014-2016				4.36	87.45	
		2014-2015						
T10: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts to improve water management (focus area 4B)	2014-2019				6.22	44.97	13.83	
	2014-2018				6.22	44.97		
	2014-2017				6.22	44.97		
	2014-2016				3.14	22.70		
	2014-2015							
T9: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts supporting biodiversity and/or landscapes (focus area 4A)	2014-2019				44.72	115.40	38.75	
	2014-2018				44.72	115.40		
	2014-2017				44.72	115.40		
	2014-2016				20.94	54.03		
	2014-2015				1.60	4.13		
FA/M	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023	
P4	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	350,206,971.45	82.23	239,448,069.03	56.22	425,898,054.96	
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	6,414,488.07	126.42	2,733,541.04	53.88	5,073,807.18	
M01.1	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019			929,521.20	58.48	1,589,390.17	
M01.1	O12 - Number of participants in trainings	2014-2019			1,297.00	78.61	1,650.00	
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	2,436,972.29	79.70	1,166,140.82	38.14	3,057,577.92	

M02.1	O13 - Number of beneficiaries advised	2014-2019			678.00	26.75	2,535.00
M04	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	82,439,341.12	139.45	44,434,335.49	75.16	59,116,341.63
M04	O2 - Total investment	2014-2019			43,342,428.14	71.69	60,462,191.86
M04.4	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2019			4,672.00	42.01	11,120.00
M08	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	14,388,000.17	77.48	13,692,925.70	73.73	18,571,039.50
M08.1	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019			8,847,572.60	60.70	14,575,903.61
M08.1	O5 - Total area (ha)	2014-2019			6,172.00	247.08	2,498.00
M08.2	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019			2,006.68	20.07	10,000.00
M08.2	O5 - Total area (ha)	2014-2019			1.00	2.00	50.00
M08.3	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019			0.00	0.00	142,975.29
M08.3	O4 - Number of holdings/beneficiaries supported	2014-2019					1.00
M08.5	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019			4,843,346.42	126.06	3,842,160.60
M08.5	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2019			838.00	207.94	403.00
M08.5	O5 - Total area (ha)	2014-2019			3,671.97	43.71	8,400.00
M10	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	200,917,940.06	72.69	155,405,021.40	56.22	276,414,061.61
M10.1	O5 - Total area (ha)	2014-2019			474,204.00	74.63	635,399.00
M11	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	24,624,804.46	73.58	18,572,568.74	55.50	33,465,095.56
M11.1	O5 - Total area (ha)	2014-2019			2,077.00	18.62	11,153.00
M11.2	O5 - Total area (ha)	2014-2019			63,589.00	111.00	57,287.00
M15	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	0.00				
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	18,985,425.28	62.87	3,443,535.84	11.40	30,200,131.56

**Focus Area 5B**

FA/M	Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2023
5B	T15: Total investment for energy efficiency (€) (focus area 5B)	2014-2019	14,508,002.03	71.75	14,508,002.03	71.75	20,219,521.05
		2014-2018	11,587,950.75	57.31	9,380,795.88	46.39	
		2014-2017	1,586,895.45	7.85	1,586,895.45	7.85	
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					
FA/M	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
5B	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	8,778,876.67	91.87	6,202,782.15	64.91	9,556,043.40
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	582,739.31	66.69	477,758.47	54.68	873,813.20
M01.1	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019			76,865.21	77.25	99,498.31
M01.1	O12 - Number of participants in trainings	2014-2019			288.00	110.77	260.00
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	109,410.63	60.02	86,647.49	47.53	182,303.28
M02.1	O13 - Number of beneficiaries advised	2014-2019			70.00	84.34	83.00
M04	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	7,777,351.73	94.73	5,598,467.26	68.19	8,210,187.71
M04	O2 - Total investment	2014-2019			14,508,002.03	71.75	20,219,521.05
M04.1 M04.2 M04.3	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2019			923.00	322.73	286.00
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	309,375.00	106.78	39,908.93	13.77	289,739.21

**Focus Area 5C**

FA/M	Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2023
5C	T16: Total investment in renewable energy production (€) (focus area 5C)	2014-2019	11,642,702.41	46.36	1,022,617.45	4.07	25,112,831.23
		2014-2018	1,633,794.74	6.51			
		2014-2017					
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					
FA/M	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
5C	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	2,721,663.86	16.27	1,093,169.08	6.54	16,725,726.01
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	582,739.31	66.69	477,758.39	54.68	873,813.20
M01.1	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019			76,865.21	77.25	99,498.31
M01.1	O12 - Number of participants in trainings	2014-2019			288.00	110.77	260.00
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	86,202.48	60.02	68,267.67	47.53	143,632.88
M02.1	O13 - Number of beneficiaries advised	2014-2019			55.00	83.33	66.00
M07	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	438,828.24	5.42	76,606.96	0.95	8,100,891.21
M07.2	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2019			1.00	0.51	197.00
M07.2 M07.3 M07.4 M07.5 M07.6 M07.7 M07.8	O2 - Total investment	2014-2019			202,450.94	2.08	9,721,069.45
M08	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	1,304,518.83	21.41	430,627.14	7.07	6,091,735.76
M08	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2019					100.00
M08.6	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019			430,627.14	7.07	6,091,735.76
M08.6	O2 - Total investment	2014-2019			921,391.98	5.99	15,391,761.78
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	309,375.00	20.41	39,908.92	2.63	1,515,652.96

### Focus Area 5D

FA/M	Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2023
5D	T18: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts targeting reduction of GHG and/or ammonia emissions (focus area 5D)	2014-2019			4.42	105.23	4.20
		2014-2018			4.42	105.23	
		2014-2017			4.42	105.23	
		2014-2016			3.11	74.04	
		2014-2015					
FA/M	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
5D	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	20,381,940.60	82.97	10,915,917.45	44.43	24,566,863.86
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	582,739.31	66.69	477,758.43	54.68	873,813.20
M01.1	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019			76,865.17	77.25	99,498.31
M01.1	O12 - Number of participants in trainings	2014-2019			288.00	110.77	260.00
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	770,516.80	60.02	610,208.55	47.53	1,283,857.02
M02.1	O13 - Number of beneficiaries advised	2014-2019			492.00	83.67	588.00
M04	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	10,311,902.42	184.39	1,526,445.29	27.29	5,592,579.87
M04	O2 - Total investment	2014-2019			12,167,592.15	87.74	13,867,867.72
M04.1 M04.3 M04.4	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2019			631.00	12.90	4,893.00
M10	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	8,407,407.07	56.82	8,261,596.22	55.84	14,795,474.71
M10.1	O5 - Total area (ha)	2014-2019			74,668.00	124.85	59,807.08
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	309,375.00	15.31	39,908.96	1.97	2,021,139.06

**Focus Area 5E**

FA/M	Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2023
5E	T19: percentage of agricultural and forest land under management contracts contributing to carbon sequestration and conservation (focus area 5E)	2014-2019			0.13	57.78	0.22
		2014-2018			0.13	57.78	
		2014-2017			0.13	57.78	
		2014-2016			0.03	13.33	
		2014-2015					
FA/M	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
5E	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	28,968,170.07	147.68	13,770,655.92	70.20	19,615,162.64
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	582,739.31	66.69	477,758.47	54.68	873,813.20
M01.1	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019			76,865.22	77.25	99,498.31
M01.1	O12 - Number of participants in trainings	2014-2019			288.00	110.77	260.00
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	521,155.66	92.89	174,870.41	31.17	561,028.93
M02.1	O13 - Number of beneficiaries advised	2014-2019			64.00	19.63	326.00
M04	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	3,249,416.88	74.70	2,648,185.72	60.88	4,349,977.25
M04	O2 - Total investment	2014-2019			2,513,143.26	46.89	5,359,364.92
M04.4	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2019			1,520.00	19.35	7,857.00
M08	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	22,650,656.78	185.42	9,384,205.16	76.82	12,215,687.80
M08.1	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019			6,071,174.10	134.85	4,502,204.40
M08.1	O5 - Total area (ha)	2014-2019			400.00	48.08	832.00
M08.2	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019			0.00	0.00	7,000.00
M08.2	O5 - Total area (ha)	2014-2019					50.00
M08.3	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019			0.00	0.00	428,925.89
M08.4	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019			3,204,084.28	67.70	4,732,443.22
M08.5	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019			108,946.78	4.28	2,545,114.29
M08.5	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2019			116.00	29.52	393.00
M10	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	1,466,261.73	118.78	1,034,949.07	83.84	1,234,396.85
M10.1	O5 - Total area (ha)	2014-2019			1,847.00	61.13	3,021.60
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	497,939.71	130.95	50,687.09	13.33	380,258.61

### Focus Area 6A

FA/M	Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2023
6A	T20: Jobs created in supported projects (focus area 6A)	2014-2019			2.00	0.26	765.00
		2014-2018			2.00	0.26	
		2014-2017					
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					
FA/M	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
6A	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	24,799,682.41	160.84	4,193,571.01	27.20	15,419,040.45
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	220,810.79	60.02	174,870.41	47.53	367,921.16
M02.1	O13 - Number of beneficiaries advised	2014-2019			141.00	83.93	168.00
M06	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	16,867,573.90	124.65	893,773.07	6.61	13,531,661.22
M06	O2 - Total investment	2014-2019			925,160.21	1.74	53,177,039.05
M06.2 M06.4	O4 - Number of holdings/beneficiaries supported	2014-2019			2.00	0.59	340.00
M08	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	6,941,796.47	569.84	3,032,904.09	248.97	1,218,200.95
M08	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2019					20.00
M08.6	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019			3,032,904.09	248.97	1,218,200.95
M08.6	O2 - Total investment	2014-2019			5,230,444.64	171.74	3,045,502.38
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	769,501.25	255.43	92,023.44	30.55	301,257.12

**Focus Area 6B**

FA/M	Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2023	
6B	T23: Jobs created in supported projects (Leader) (focus area 6B)	2014-2019			12.00	12.00	100.00	
		2014-2018			12.00	12.00		
		2014-2017						
		2014-2016						
		2014-2015						
	T22: percentage of rural population benefiting from improved services/infrastructures (focus area 6B)	2014-2019				2.34	5.14	45.53
		2014-2018				1.93	4.24	
		2014-2017				45.53	100.01	
		2014-2016						
		2014-2015						
	T21: percentage of rural population covered by local development strategies (focus area 6B)	2014-2019				45.53	100.01	45.53
		2014-2018				45.53	100.01	
		2014-2017				45.53	100.01	
		2014-2016						
		2014-2015						
FA/M	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023	
6B	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	157,499,632.20	113.20	47,814,671.17	34.36	139,137,933.26	
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	3,529,411.77	48.74	259,695.24	3.59	7,241,491.36	
M01.1	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019			259,695.24	7.36	3,529,411.76	
M01.1	O12 - Number of participants in trainings	2014-2019					4,890.00	
M07	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	22,845,174.42	94.55	9,683,347.16	40.07	24,163,254.89	
M07.1	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2019					18.00	
M07.1 M07.2 M07.4 M07.5 M07.6 M07.7 M07.8	O15 - Population benefiting of improved services/infrastructures (IT or others)	2014-2019			71,067.00	5.14	1,381,745.00	
M07.2	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2019			1.00	1.79	56.00	
M07.4	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2019			71.00	61.21	116.00	
M07.5	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2019			23.00	15.33	150.00	
M07.6	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2019			8.00	22.86	35.00	
M07.7	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2019			5.00	20.00	25.00	



M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	70,104,059.48	133.94	16,777,983.14	32.06	52,339,864.54
M19	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	61,020,986.53	110.16	21,093,645.63	38.08	55,393,322.47
M19	O18 - Population covered by LAG	2014-2019			1,381,745.00	100.00	1,381,745.00
M19	O19 - Number of LAGs selected	2014-2019			18.00	100.00	18.00
M19.1	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019			58,171.37	116.68	49,853.99
M19.2	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019			12,890,545.46	33.43	38,564,831.11
M19.3	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019			642,414.06	16.62	3,866,453.91
M19.4	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019			7,502,514.74	58.10	12,912,183.46

Focus Area 6C							
FA/M	Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2023
6C	T24: percentage of rural population benefiting from new or improved services/infrastructures (ICT) (focus area 6C)	2014-2019					16.47
		2014-2018					
		2014-2017					
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					
FA/M	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
6C	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	1,041,954.37	50.65	606,769.26	29.50	2,057,085.00
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	291,369.66	66.69	238,879.22	54.68	436,906.60
M01.1	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019			38,432.59	77.25	49,749.15
M01.1	O12 - Number of participants in trainings	2014-2019			144.00	110.77	130.00
M07	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2019	750,584.71	46.33	367,890.04	22.71	1,620,178.40
M07.3	O15 - Population benefiting of improved services/infrastructures (IT or others)	2014-2019					500,000.00
M07.3	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2019			3.00	18.75	16.00

## Documents

Document title	Document type	Document date	Local reference	Commission reference	Checksum	Files	Sent date	Sent By
AIR Financial Annex 2014UK06RDRP004	Financial annex (System)	16-03-2020			1945066872	AIRfinancialAnnex2014UK06RDRP004_en.pdf		



# Agenda Item 3

By virtue of paragraph(s) vi of Standing Order 17.42

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Chair  
Public Accounts Committee

5 February 2021

Dear Chair

Ahead of my session with you and the Committee on Monday, my team and I have prepared a short note (attached) to provide background, supporting your reflections on the fifth Assembly/Senedd and the work of Economy, Skills and Natural Resources Group.

Alongside delivering the important priorities of the Welsh Government, the challenges presented in recent years by the combination of responding to Covid-19, managing the impacts of EU transition, and dealing with emergencies such as flooding and animal disease, have placed significant demands on teams and individuals and on the resources at our collective disposal. As Additional Accounting Officer, I would like to put on record my thanks to colleagues across my Group, wider Welsh Government, and our partner organisations across Wales for the hard work, dedication to public service, flexibility and determination they have shown in continuing to overcome the unprecedented and sustained nature of these challenges.

In addition to a number of overview points, this note also provides an update to the Committee on the financial support to businesses that Group has provided or coordinated as part of our Covid response (Annex 1), and a promised update on the International Conference Centre Wales (Annex 2).

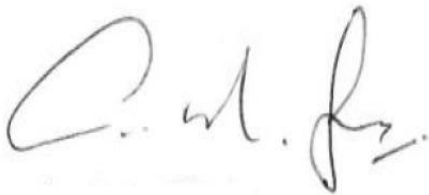
I am grateful to you and Committee colleagues for the constructively challenging way you have held me as AAO and my Group to account over this recent period, and for what I feel has been

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a frank and productive working relationship. I hope that our input to your various enquiries has been of value, and that the approach we have developed in terms of briefing the Committee has also been of benefit.

With my thanks and best wishes to you, Committee colleagues, and your team.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Slade', written in a cursive style.

**Andrew Slade**  
Director General  
Economy, Skills and Natural Resources

## Public Accounts Committee – 8 February 2021

### Reflections on the Fifth Assembly/Senedd: Welsh Government – Economy, Skills and Natural Resources

#### Summary Paper

#### Covid-19 and Recovery

In the earliest days of the pandemic, ESNR's focus was on supporting the cross-government immediate emergency response, including in respect of supply chains for food and fast-moving consumer goods, critical national infrastructure, and addressing immediate economic shocks. We have remained on an emergency footing throughout, ready to address issues as they arise, with twice-weekly Group stocktakes and out-of-hours rotas, feeding into the central Welsh Government Covid and contingency monitoring and response machinery.

Over the months, several hundred staff across the Group have been deployed to address Covid-related issues, and many colleagues have seen their day jobs increasingly shift to address consequences of the pandemic. In addition we have directly supported the work of other WG teams, including with provision of advice on e.g. veterinary scientific matters.

Alongside emergency measures and addressing the impacts of restrictions, dealing with Covid has become an additional 'temporary normal', necessitating a wider look at the consequences of the pandemic and at strategic planning (with the information and scenarios available) across a range of business areas.

In relation to ESNR Group's remit, above all Covid-19 has affected the economy and labour market on an unprecedented scale, bringing significant disruption (including across supply chains), and led to sharp falls in the number of people employed, the number of hours they work and the number of job vacancies on offer.

Economic impacts have been particularly felt in the sectors that have faced the longest and toughest restrictions. This is most evident in the hospitality, tourism, creative/cultural, events and non-essential retail sectors, which have all seen a substantial fall in activity. We have worked closely throughout the pandemic with all sectors, including on workplace safety and operating guidance.

Similar issues have affected ESNR Group directly, with the closure of the Cadw estate and ongoing issues for some of our major Arm's Length Bodies such as the National Museum for Wales and the National Library for Wales. We are working closely with the management teams in these organisations to understand the impact of associated loss of revenues.

The labour market in Wales has deteriorated since the start of the pandemic. The number of paid employees has generally increased in recent years, but has fallen during the pandemic. Early estimates for December 2020 indicate that the number of paid employees in Wales was 1.23 million. This was a decrease of 30,300 (2.4%) on February 2020, but a slight increase of 3,000 (0.2%) compared with the lowest point in November 2020.

Young people are at particular risk of a lifetime of scarring from impacts of lost learning and the acute challenge of trying to enter the labour market during a recession. The effects of the current recession are also hitting those nearing the end of their working lives, those with lower qualification levels, those in low-paid employment, those in more fragile areas of employment and the otherwise disadvantaged, including minority groups.

We know that in responding to the Covid-19 crisis and the end of EU transition there will be opportunities and a necessity to consider what sort of economy is needed for Wales, responding to the changed circumstances, new working environment and the future of work.

As the First Minister and Cabinet have made clear, supporting the economy through, and then ultimately out of the pandemic has the fundamental goal of achieving sustainable well-being with dignity and fairness for people. Improving the well-being of everyone in Wales is the mission which drives our approach to the economy. Our long-term goal is a resilient economy which has the well-being of people and the environment at its heart.

This economic recovery must be one that tackles the serious environmental issues we face and improves our resilience, whilst tackling social inequality by ensuring that our aim for a greener and socially just Wales is at its heart.

The well-being of all Welsh citizens has framed our response to the pandemic and it will be the fundamental principle which frames our economic recovery and reconstruction effort. Specific support to help businesses through, and to recover from, the pandemic has included:

- our multi-million pound, Wales-only Economic Resilience Fund aimed at addressing gaps in the UK national support schemes that the UK Government has put in place. In total, the ERF has now made over 13,700 offers and committed over £240m. See Annex 1.
- we provided further support in partnership with Local Authorities for £1,021m rates relief to business across Wales. See Annex 1 for breakdown.
- £100m of financial transaction loan finance was provided through the Development Bank of Wales (DBW).
- following the principles of providing enhanced support for business development, on 28 September we announced an additional £140m available to businesses to help them deal with the economic challenges of Covid-19, the UK's impending exit from the EU transition period and to support businesses through the recent firebreak period and pre-Christmas restrictions. We announced a further £20m of support in January 2021 as the lockdown restrictions continue in Wales.
- The principles of the Economic Contract sit at the heart of our Economic Resilience Fund, and our commitment to driving investment with a social purpose has seen an increase in commitment from businesses to the principles of the Contract – with over 13,000 now committing to the principles.



- In particular we want to have a focus on helping businesses, particularly those in the low carbon economy to safeguard and create good quality jobs, rooted in local communities. We are working in social partnership with trade unions and employers to put a stronger emphasis on our economic contract – a ‘something for something’ approach, with social justice at its heart.

For the economy to emerge stronger and more productive than before, both individuals and businesses need support to navigate the crisis. The new Welsh Government employability offer will be central to our economic recovery and ambitions - for a green, just, digital recovery, and crucial in supporting those most likely to be negatively impacted in the Welsh labour market.

The Covid-19 commitment is for skills and jobs: we have committed to offer advice and support to people 16+ to find work, pursue self-employment or find a place in education or training, with hiring incentives for employers to recruit individuals most affected by Covid-19. Young people 16-24, disabled people, people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, women and others most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic will be prioritised.

We have supported Higher Education Institutions throughout the crisis with a further £40m announced in January 2021 to support Welsh students.

We worked closely with Welsh business to help Wales address PPE shortages. This was co-ordinated through CERET, the Critical Equipment Requirements Engineering Team (CERET) led by Welsh Government and Industry Wales supported by Life Sciences Hub and the Surgical Material Testing Laboratory (SMTL) in Bridgend. There was a very positive response from Welsh Industry which combined with UK procurement and exchange of PPE and NWSSP own procurement meant that Wales never ran out of PPE. Examples of the adaptability of Welsh Industry include c.50 companies producing visors, hand sanitiser, gowns, face masks and face coverings.

As a result of Covid-19 and the subsequent movement and business restrictions, there was an unprecedentedly sharp and severe drop in bus passenger numbers (by around 90%) across public transport services last spring which in turn saw the loss of almost all ticket revenues. Throughout the pandemic, the Welsh Government has made additional funding available to support public transport services, firstly maintaining a skeleton network to support essential journeys during the first national lockdown, and then to ramp up services to support the re-opening of schools and the wider economy.

We are working closely with the management in team in Cardiff Airport to understand the medium term impacts on air travel and freight will be given the drop in passenger numbers arising from international as well as national travel restrictions. As discussed with the Committee last autumn, this is, of course, not just a Wales issue but a world-wide industry concern.

In addition to additional funding, we have also reformed the way that public transport services are delivered to reflect the new commercial realities and maximise the benefits and outcomes from our increased funding. From February 2021, the delivery of day to day rail services will be the responsibility of a new publicly-owned subsidiary of Transport for Wales, allowing government to have an even greater role in the delivery of rail services in Wales and the borders. The agreement underpinning funding through the bus emergency scheme (BES) will deliver a lasting

partnership between operators and public bodies giving more control in return for our funding to enable a reshaping of Wales' bus network, supporting the management and interaction across transport modes including smart ticketing, a reference network that meets wider objectives, and coordinated timetabling across modes.

Dealing with the consequences of Covid-19 looks set to dominate much of the rest of 2021.

## **EU Transition**

The Welsh Government's response to EU Transition is shared across several Welsh Government groups and is not the sole responsibility of ESNR. Nevertheless, EU Transition is a key consideration for ESNR; the volume of work falling to the Group is significant given the breadth of its policy and operational coverage.

In headline terms, the Group is directly engaged in EU Exit emergency control arrangements; addressing borders operational and infrastructure issues (including design and development of new Border Control Posts for North West and South West Wales); continuing to work to ensure that necessary legislation is in place across relevant subject matter areas; building new post-Exit processes and systems; addressing the design and delivery of over 4,000 new policy and operational functions that have flowed to Welsh Government from the EU institutions, including significant new areas of 'right of policy initiative'; working with other parts of the UK to operationalise new 'common frameworks' across a range of subject matter areas where responsibilities lie at both the UK and devolved administration level; feeding into the development of new trade agreements; and addressing significant short and longer term economic issues arising from EU Transition.

In financial terms, we have some assurance that the UK will continue to participate in EU programmes funded through the 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework under the terms of the Withdrawal Agreement, meaning we will be able to continue to deliver most of our investment programmes through to December 2023. Future funding and scheme management is much less clear. Colleagues have been working with stakeholders across Wales on a new regional investment policy which would put us in a strong position to hit the ground running when the EU Structural and Investment funds begin to tail off towards the end of this year. The Framework for Regional Investment in Wales, published 18 November 2020, sets out our high-level strategy for achieving prosperity and an inclusive economy to which local, regional and national (i.e. Wales-wide) interventions will contribute. Discussions with UK Government continue.

Much planning went into contingency planning for the end of EU Transition. Whilst many of the initial worse case scenarios did not materialise on 1 January, significant work continues to manage the consequences, with a slight sense of hiatus. Volumes of traffic through Welsh ports have yet to return to pre-transition levels and while 'turn-back' levels at ports are now relatively low (5-10%), it is clear that many businesses and sectors are reporting significant issues (including added costs, complexity and time) with both exports and imports. The extent to which these constitute so-called 'teething troubles' remains to be seen. There are currently reports of significant numbers of lorries returning to the Continent empty.

Our preparation work with business in Wales prior to the end of EU Transition was comprehensive. Recent surveys across all industries suggest of businesses currently trading, 22% were fully prepared for the end of the EU transition period, 38% were somewhat prepared for the end of the EU transition period and 1% were not prepared for the end of the EU transition period.

As indicated above, there are many number of longer-term policy and operational capacity issues we need to address as a consequence of EU Transition. The Welsh Government will receive over 4,000 additional powers/ functions arising from EU transition many of which may be described as technical, and of limited political/ policy-making significance. In a number of areas we will assume significant and substantive powers and responsibilities and need to carefully consider how we can best exploit these powers and delivery obligations to achieve outcomes in line with Welsh Government ambitions.

There are more near-term implications such as what our Border Operating Model should be and managing Intergovernmental engagement and relations across the UK which impact in 2021. We continue to emphasise the value of designing the new border regime on the basis of constructive pan-UK co-operation, which appropriately respects devolved and non-devolved responsibilities, and also takes account of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Effective border arrangements will be the result of a complex mix of responsibilities between various parties working collaboratively. We are engaging with Welsh Port Authorities, relevant Port Health Authorities, County Councils, the Animal and Plant Health Agency and the Food Standards Agency on issues of readiness at Points of Entry (POEs) in Wales. On the basis of these discussions, we are working to ensure that any new border infrastructure appropriately reflects the nature of trade flows and resultant sanitary and phytosanitary requirements at relevant Welsh ports

### **Programme for Government Activity**

The Group continues to deliver on the Government's priorities in the remaining weeks of the current Senedd period. Aligned to Prosperity for All and the Well Being and Future Generations Act, the Economic Action Plan (EAP) is the guiding policy and strategy document for all of Welsh Government's economic activities. The 2021-22 plan builds on the considerable progress in implementing and embedding key elements of the plan, involving engagement with a range of stakeholders, particularly the business community and social partners.

The pathway to Welsh economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic builds on the foundations of Prosperity for All: The Economic Action Plan. This shaped an economic development programme which invests in people and businesses – driving prosperity and reducing inequality across all of Wales. The mission builds on the early progress we have made in raising the profile and challenges in the Foundational Economy, recognising there is more to be done to spread and scale the approach.

Other key programmes include A Low Carbon Wales, Cymraeg 2050, the Employability Plan and our Fair Work agenda run through all interventions. The Well-being of Future Generations Act and its wider framework continue to provide a

uniquely Welsh way of tackling the long-term challenges that our people and our planet face. It has guided our approach to reconstruction ensuring a values-based recovery, delivering a prosperous, green and equal economic recovery that recognises the utmost importance of investing in people and place.

### **Group Governance and Lessons Learned**

Throughout these unprecedented times, we have worked hard as a team and with colleagues across WG to put in place appropriate, responsive and agile governance and control arrangements that help ensure appropriate oversight of Group activities. This has included rapid lessons-identified sessions, 'in-flight' reviews of programmes in train, use of Gateway reviews for major programmes, guidance and regular aide-memoires for team leaders and staff, and use of challenge teams to test concepts, policy design and operational interventions, along with usual ex-post checks and reviews. These complement the important ongoing work of colleagues in Internal Audit and Audit Wales.

As the pandemic has progressed we have developed and iterated our Group central co-ordination mechanisms and our senior leadership team gatherings to meet the demands of the times. We have placed emphasis on strong communications up, down and across ESNR to keep colleagues updated on developments and stay closely in touch with one another (for wellbeing reasons as much as organisational ones). As part of our 'ESNR For The Future' internal programme, we have a cross-cutting team drawn from all parts and all levels within the organisation, including trades union colleagues, helping us learn lessons from our remote working, and, in turn, with co-designing our Group and wider Welsh Government operating model for the future.

With our Ministers, the Group has delivered a huge amount across the range of its subject areas throughout an intense period. Notwithstanding the difficult circumstances, and inevitable levels of fatigue across many parts of the Group, the sense of common purpose and team spirit across ESNR has been superb throughout.

**Covid-19 Economic Resilience Fund - Update**

<b>BAS - ERF 1</b>	<b>Micro</b>	<b>SME</b>	<b>Large</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
No. applications received	8,143	1,311	28	<b>9,482</b>
Amount £m (received)	£106.0	£56.1	£11.8	<b>£173.9</b>
No. applications approved	5,850	1,124	24	<b>6,998</b>
Amount £m (approved)	£78.8	£48.6	£10.5	<b>£137.9</b>
Jobs safeguarded	20,820	27,135	47	<b>48,002</b>

<b>BAS - ERF 2</b>	<b>Micro</b>	<b>SME</b>	<b>Large</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
No. applications received	4,827	358	5	<b>5,185</b>
Amount £m (received)	£50.2	£13.7	£1.3	<b>£65.2</b>
No. applications approved	4,473	320	4	<b>4,797</b>
Amount £m (approved)	£46.7	£12.7	£1.3	<b>£60.7</b>
Jobs safeguarded	4,340	7,234	0	<b>11,574</b>

<b>DBW - CWBLS</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
No. applications approved	1,132
Amount £m (approved)	£92.0
Jobs safeguarded	16,000

<b>NDR grants</b>					
Grant 1 : 25k (march)		Grant 2: 10k (march)		Grant 3: 2.5k (Local0	
No. payments	Value payments	No. payments	Value payments	No. payments	Value payments
<b>8,502</b>	<b>£212,303,060</b>	<b>56,079</b>	<b>£561,281,046</b>	<b>1,648</b>	<b>£4,120,000</b>

Grant 4: 5K (Firebreak)			Grant 5: 1-4K (Firebreak)		
No. payments	Value payments	No. employees	No. payments	Value payments	No. employees
<b>4,963</b>	<b>£24,811,000</b>	<b>58,655</b>	<b>37,523</b>	<b>£94,371,000</b>	<b>152,502</b>
Grant 6: 1.5K/2k					
No. payments	Value payments	No. employees			
<b>10,686</b>	<b>£18,253,647</b>	<b>28,086</b>			

Christmas Restrictions and Extensions to date							
Grant 7: 3K		Grant 8: 5K RV 21-50		Grant 9: 5k RV 51+		Grant 10: 2k Disc	
No. payments	Value payments	No. payments	Value payments	No. payments	Value payments	No. payments	Value payments
<b>23,583</b>	<b>£70,727,500</b>	<b>4,600</b>	<b>£23,345,000</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>£2,257,000</b>	<b>4,744</b>	<b>£9,606,000</b>

**ERF – Business Development Grant and the Sector Specific Fund:**

Business Development Grants (BDG):

<b>BDG</b>	<b>Micro</b>	<b>SME / Large</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
No. applications received	4,393 @41.88m	1,456	<b>5,849</b>
Applications rejected	3,208 @ £30.4m	639	<b>3,847</b>
Offers made	1,186 @ £11.5m	817 @ £34.7m	<b>2,003</b>
Offers accepted	1,185 @ £11.5m	809 @ £34.6m	<b>1,994</b> <b>@£46m</b>

(Information as at January 2021)

### **International Conference Centre Wales**

When I attended Committee with the Permanent Secretary during the autumn, I promised to provide a supplementary commentary regarding the additional funding agreed for the International Convention Centre Wales.

As the Committee is aware, the International Convention Centre Wales (ICCW) Ltd is a world-class convention facility completed in 2019 via a 50:50 Joint Venture between the Welsh Ministers and The Celtic Manor Resort Ltd. The investment by the Welsh Ministers is a response to a strategic ambition to grow business tourism and enhance the reputation which Wales has as a host for globally significant events.

The nature of the business demanded its closure under the measures imposed to address the spread of Covid-19 from March 2020 onwards. The facility has remained closed since then due to the exceptional lead times for large events and the uncertainty which has persisted with regards to necessary ongoing Covid-19 restrictions.

Additional investment from the company's shareholders was requested as part of a financial recovery package which is predominantly funded by the company's private sector lender. The funding requested reflects the company's projections of a limited return to trading early in 2021 and normal trading in 2022. This package was approved by all parties in October 2020.

The impact of Covid-19 measures on ICCW is particularly acute, given that the convention centre had only recently opened. The response of the company has been encouraging though – ensuring that sales and customer services have been retained throughout 2020 and that the business stands ready to reopen as soon as conditions allow.

It was deemed to be both appropriate and prudent to respond positively to ICCW's request for investment. The financial package agreed by the shareholders and the primary lender reflect confidence in the company to recover from the impact of Covid-19, whilst projecting confidence in the ability of the wider economy to do likewise.

We remain confident that the medium to long term prospects for ICCW are strong and that the Centre will both deliver our policy objectives whilst also returning financial value on our investment



# Agenda Item 4

By virtue of paragraph(s) vi of Standing Order 17.42

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Nick Ramsay MS  
Chair of Public Accounts Committee  
Senedd Cymru  
Tŷ Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1SN

20 January 2021

Dear Nick

## **Public Accounts Committee Report on the Scrutiny of Accounts 2019-20.**

I am writing in response to the Public Accounts Committee report on the Scrutiny of Accounts 2019-20. I would like to thank the Committee for its scrutiny.

I'd like to thank the Committee for noting the efforts of Commission staff in facilitating Senedd business during COVID-19 and ensuring a safe working environment for all. Thank you also for your congratulations both for a successful audit and our staff related achievements including Investors in People Platinum status.

I would like to take this opportunity to assure the Committee that we remain as committed as ever to providing assurance through external scrutiny and audit as well as our internal governance framework. This work is vital in underpinning our confidence that we use resources efficiently, economically and effectively in delivering our services to the Senedd.

Your Committee's recommendations concerning the Commission are addressed in full in the attached Annex. If you would like any further information on any matter covered in the Annex, please do not hesitate to let me know.

As ever, if there is any further information your Committee would like, please let me know.

Yours sincerely



cc Senedd Commissioners, Nia Morgan



## Annex 1

### Public Accounts Committee Report on the Scrutiny of Accounts 2019-20

**Recommendation 1.** The Senedd Commission should remove any future KPIs that set to minimise under expenditure, and focus instead on using financial resources as efficiently as possible.

#### Noted

The indicator on minimising under expenditure is useful to the Senedd Commission and it will be retained internally. However, we will review the corporate performance indicators during 2021-22 and consider whether any additional indicators would provide additional clarity on efficiency. These will be put in place during 2022-23.

**Recommendation 2.** The Senedd Commission should lead by example by setting ambitious financial management KPIs that strive for more than just an unqualified audit opinion. The targets should consider the effectiveness, economy and efficiency with which the Commission uses its resources, and should be put in place no later than the 2022-23 financial year.

#### Noted

As noted in our response to Recommendation 1, we will review the corporate performance indicators during 2021-22 and consider whether any additional indicators would provide additional clarity on the effectiveness, economy and efficiency with which the Commission uses its resources. These will be put in place during 2022-23.

**Recommendation 3.** The Commission should ensure that future staff surveys are:

- ✦ consistent from year to year to ensure that meaningful conclusions about long-term trends can be drawn from their findings; and
- ✦ ask similar questions to the staff surveys of other legislatures and public bodies to allow for the results to be benchmarked.

#### Accepted

The 2020 staff survey provides a new approach, and has been procured in partnership with the Scottish Parliament and will ask largely the same questions. The



questions asked will enable continued benchmarking across the Civil Service and the wider public sector.

**Recommendation 4.** The Commission should undertake a review of the experiences of candidates of BAME backgrounds, throughout the recruitment process, with a view to removing any barriers to appointment that the review uncovers. The review should be carried out within the first year of the Sixth Senedd. The findings of the review should be made available to our successor Committee, alongside any remedial action the Commission intends to take.

#### **Accepted**

Following a review of recruitment effectiveness, we have worked closely with community partners, candidates and Business in the Community Wales to understand the barriers to recruitment faced by candidates of BAME background.

We will continue with our commitment in this area by engaging a review of candidate experiences in the first year of the Sixth Senedd and return with findings, together with any remedial actions proposed, to PAC ahead of the September 2022 meeting.

**Recommendation 5.** The Commission should ensure that its new recruitment portal collects data about the socio-economic diversity of its workforce and of its recruitment candidates. This data should be included in the Commission's annual diversity data reporting in the same format as the Commission has provided for BAME candidates (i.e. with data relating to each stage of the recruitment process).

#### **Accepted**

The Commission is committed to better understanding the socio-economic diversity of our workforce and we will engage with the Social Mobility Commission and use its Employer Index during 2021 to support this commitment and hopefully aid continued improvements in our data collection.

**Recommendation 6.** The Commission should ensure that clear, measurable objectives are set for all engagement activities, that the impact of those activities is tracked and their outcomes are evaluated against objectives to determine whether they represented good value for money. This information should be published on an annual basis as part of the Commission's Annual Report.

#### **Accepted**



We will continue to ensure that all our engagement activities have clear, measurable objectives and are evaluated robustly. The evidence of this is available in our Annual Report and Accounts.

Over the past year the Commission has developed a new engagement strategy with an additional emphasis on reaching more difficult-to-reach parts of the population. In order to achieve this during Covid restrictions we have increased the number of virtual engagement activities, which has led to progress against our objectives.

**Recommendation 7. At the start of the Sixth Senedd, the Commission should prioritise identifying its hard-to-reach groups, set out ways to engage with them, and take action to do so as soon as practicably possible. This engagement strategy should be made publicly available.**

### **Accepted**

In advance of the Sixth Senedd, we have already identified hard-to-reach groups and taken steps to improve how we engage with them. The Commission's Communication and Engagement strategy places a greater emphasis on building relationships with groups who are more difficult to reach; the "politically apathetic".

Since our appearance in front of your Committee, we've held a series of events targeting "not the usual suspects" by attracting new audiences to Senedd engagement activities. We concentrated on mainstream subjects which were Covid-related and worked with other organisations.

This allowed us to make use of the contact lists of a wide variety of institutions such as the FAW, the WRU and Young Black Professionals and of individuals with a large social media following, such as Michael Sheen, to raise awareness of events and to offer tickets. Our initial analysis of the events show that this approach paid dividends when looking at attracting new audiences.

We've also, since the scrutiny session, launched our new Commission website. The Site has been designed with hard-to-reach audiences at the forefront of our thinking. The improved search function makes it easier for people to find what they are looking for, and the expanded glossary – with an emphasis on explaining parliamentary terms and language – will make more of our information accessible to those who aren't political.

In addition, we've updated our social media strategy to make it more user-friendly. This has included using a warmer and friendlier tone of voice. We will continue to focus on enhancing our social media provision over the coming months.



**Recommendation 8. The Commission should increase procurement from Welsh suppliers of goods and products that are of Welsh origin, unless not available or not at a reasonable cost. It should take steps to enable more Welsh companies to bid for contracts, such as by breaking up large contracts into smaller ones. Any steps that the Commission takes in this area should be published in its Annual Report as year on year percentage increases.**

**Accepted**

We are working hard to increase spend with Welsh suppliers. Prior to the Covid pandemic we were making progress in this area.

Before we issue tenders we explore the Welsh market and where Welsh suppliers exist, they are encouraged to bid. Additional staff resource has been provided to help conduct preliminary market consultations. For every contract with a value that is greater than £25,000 we agree a procurement strategy, which sets out our approach.

This includes an examination of whether it is feasible to break the contract down into smaller lots. A recent example of success is the print room and multifunctional devices contract, which was split into two lots after traditionally being let as one contract. Both lots were subsequently awarded to Welsh based suppliers.

For some of our larger contracts, which rely on subcontracting, we have contractual obligations in these contracts to use local supply chains. For example, our largest contract by value is our facilities management contract with CBRE, 69 per cent of our spend on this contract is subcontracted and delivered by Welsh based suppliers.

We will continue to report our procurement performance in our Annual Report.

**Recommendation 9. The Commission should work alongside other public bodies, such as the Welsh Government, to maximise the proportion of its procurement with Welsh suppliers. The Commission should write to this or the successor Committee no later than September 2021 to set out what engagement it has carried out with other public bodies, and the steps it intends to take to improve expenditure with Welsh suppliers as a result.**

**Accepted**

We regularly collaborate with colleagues from Welsh Government and the wider public sector across Wales on procurement matters. Our Head of Procurement has a regular meeting with the Head of Category Management at Welsh Government, where discussions around Welsh spend have already taken place.



We will continue to work alongside procurement colleagues from the sector to ensure that we maintain best practice and are joined up on increasing Welsh spend. We will update the Committee no later than 30 September 2021.

**Recommendation 10. Once the Business Committee, Remuneration Board, Commission and others have determined Senedd business arrangements for the Sixth Senedd, the Commission should carry out a wholesale review of its sustainability targets in light of COVID-19 and its impact on working patterns. These new targets should be bolder and more ambitious than the last, and be published no later than September 2021.**

### **Accepted**

Following the successful conclusion of the Carbon Reduction Strategy to 2021, the Commission has agreed a set of principles and targets and actions to form the basis of its Carbon Neutral Strategy from 2021 to 2030.

The Carbon Neutral Strategy is being finalised for consideration by the Commission in March 2021. Following final approval the Strategy will be published.

Annual Sustainability Reports will be produced and published to highlight the actions taken and our progress against targets. The current targets and ambitions to work towards carbon neutrality by 2030 are significantly bolder and challenging than our previous targets.

The Strategy recognises that the pandemic will change the way people work within our offices to include more flexible working patterns and that this will enable opportunities to realise further efficiency savings to contribute to our goal of carbon neutrality by 2030.

In response to the pandemic, the Commission has established a programme to cover all aspects of our work during the current pandemic and the return to working on the estate. This includes a Futures workstream which is capturing lessons learnt and opportunities and innovation to consider the long term strategic value to the Senedd and Commission to enable more flexible, responsive and sustainable future ways of working.

The Committee's support and commitment to our continuing work and our strategic goal to work sustainably is welcomed and we look forward to providing future updates to confirm our progress.

