

# Agenda – Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee

---

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 1 – Senedd

Meeting date: 4 April 2019

Meeting time: 09.15

For further information contact:

**Gareth Price**

Committee Clerk

0300 200 6565

[SeneddEIS@assembly.wales](mailto:SeneddEIS@assembly.wales)

---

## **Private pre-meeting**

(09.15–09.30)

Sara Moran, Research, will be in attendance to give an overview of the Regional Skills Partnerships evidence sessions.

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

## **2 Paper(s) to note**

(Pages 1 – 6)

### **Attached Documents:**

EIS(5)–11–19(P1) Letter to Chair of Climate Change Environment and Rural Affairs Committee from Chair of EIS

EIS(5)–11–19(P2) Letter from Secretary of State for Wales to Chair re: City Deals

EIS(5)–11–19(P3) Letter from Redrow to Chair



Cynulliad  
Cenedlaethol  
Cymru

National  
Assembly for  
Wales

### **3 Regional Skills Partnerships: Training and Skills Providers**

(09.30–10.30)

(Pages 7 – 46)

Jeff Protheroe, Director of Operations, National Training Federation Wales

Professor Julie Lydon, Chair, Universities Wales

Keiron Rees, Policy Adviser, Universities Wales

#### **Attached Documents:**

EIS(5)–11–19(P4) Research Briefing

EIS(5)–11–19(P5) Evidence from National Training Federation for Wales

EIS(5)–11–19(P6) Evidence from Universities Wales

#### **Break**

(10.30–10.40)

### **4 Regional Skills Partnerships: Welsh Language Provision**

(10.40–11.20)

(Pages 47 – 54)

Ania Rolewska, Policy Officer, Welsh Language Commissioner

Lowri Williams, Senior Advice and Communications Officer, Welsh Language Commissioner

Dr Dafydd Trystan, Registrar and Senior Academic Manager, Cymraeg Cenedlaethol

#### **Attached Documents:**

EIS(5)–11–19(P7) Evidence from Welsh Language Commissioner

**5 Regional Skills Partnerships: Gender Imbalance, Inclusion and Lifelong Learning**

(11.20–12.00)

(Pages 55 – 66)

Cerys Furlong, Chief Executive, Chwarae Teg

David Hagendyk, Director for Wales, Learning and Work Institute

**Attached Documents:**

EIS(5)–11–19(P8) Evidence from Chwarae Teg

EIS(5)–11–19(P9) Evidence from Learning and Work Institute Cymru

**6 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 (vi) to resolve to exclude the public from item 7 and 8**

**Private de–brief**

(12.00–12.05)

**7 Draft Report: The Future Development of Transport for Wales**

(12.05–12.25)

(Pages 67 – 123)

**Attached Documents:**

EIS(5)–11–19(P10) Draft Report: The Future Development of Transport for Wales

**8 Scoping Paper: Access to Banking**

(12.25–12.30)

(Pages 124 – 129)

**Attached Documents:**

EIS(5)–11–19(P11) Scoping Paper: Access to Banking

**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru**  
Pwyllgor yr Economi, Seilwaith a Sgiliau

**National Assembly for Wales**  
Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee

Mike Hedges AM  
Chair of the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs  
Committee

25 March 2019

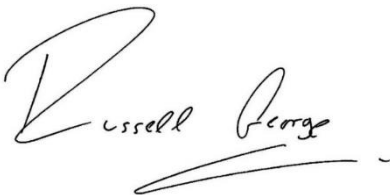
Dear Mike,

You will be aware that the Welsh Government published its first carbon budget plan – Prosperity for Wales: A Low Carbon Wales – on Thursday 21 March 2019.

The Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee has been keenly awaiting this publication in order to conduct some scrutiny of the aspects relevant to our portfolio – particularly how it addresses decarbonisation of transport and carbon-intensive industries.

I am aware that CCERA is planning a more in-depth scrutiny of the plan as a whole, but I wanted to inform you that EIS will be scrutinising the Minister for Economy and Transport at two of our meetings during May. I hope this work, and any outputs we produce arising from it, will be able to feed in to your wider scrutiny of the action plan.

Best wishes,



Russell George  
Chair, Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee





**Rt Hon Alun Cairns MP**  
Secretary of State for Wales  
Ysgrifennydd Gwladol Cymru

T: 020 7270 0575  
E: Correspondence@ukgovwales.gov.uk

Russell George  
Chair, Economy, Infrastructure  
and Skills Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

20 March 2019

SOS 19

Thank you for your letter regarding City and Growth deals in Wales.

We believe that the people who live, work and do business in each place know best and what their area needs to prosper and grow. The UK Government is engaging in an unprecedented programme of transferring decisions to local regions through City and Growth Deals. Over £700m of UK Government funding has been committed to Welsh City and Growth deals, with further funding to be made available for the mid Wales Growth Deal.

It is our ambition that all parts of Wales will be covered by a City or Growth Deal, which will act as a catalyst for regional working and to attract further investment to all parts of Wales. Each deal is different, reflecting the specific needs of each region, and each is at a different stage of development. I have set out below our approach to each deal.

### **Cardiff Capital Region City Deal**

The Cardiff Capital Region City Deal was the first deal to be signed in Wales, and is rightfully ambitious for Wales Capital City and wider region. In return for generous government investment it places significant responsibilities and accountability on the ten partner authorities to deliver for the people living and working in the region. The UK Government is currently finalising how the 5 year Gateway will be conducted, and is working with the Welsh Government and other partners to ensure that all relevant parts of the deal are considered before the next tranche of money is released.

## Swansea Bay City Region City Deal

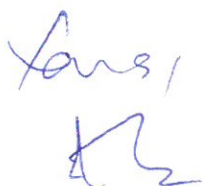
The Joint Independent Review of the Swansea Bay City Deal has now been published and provides us with a strong foundation upon which to move forward. We will work with the region over the coming weeks to implement its recommendations and to consider how best to ensure rapid delivery of those projects closest to approval. This includes considering the recommendations on assurance and evaluation alongside the draft monitoring framework which the region is working on.

## North Wales Growth Deal

At Budget 2018 we announced £120 million for the North Wales Growth Deal which reflected the merits of the proposals brought forward. We hope that this figure will provide an impetus for all partners to get the deal over the line and produce a deal that will transform North Wales. There is a significant amount of work left to be done by local partners if we are to deliver a Heads of Terms which is ambitious for the region and we look forward to receiving robust plans to use this money to best effect alongside outline business cases.

## Mid Wales Growth Deal

The Office of the Secretary of State for Wales is working with Powys and Ceredigion to help them consider what approach is best for mid Wales. There is not a one size fits all approach to growth deals, and it is important for the local area to consider for itself how a Growth Deal would be beneficial before negotiations with Government begin. Once firm proposals are received we will act quickly to ensure that Mid-Wales is able to benefit for the UK Government's City and Growth Deal programme as all other parts of Wales have done.



**Rt Hon Alun Cairns MP**  
Secretary of State for Wales  
Ysgrifennydd Gwladol Cymru

29<sup>th</sup> March 2018

**Redrow Homes South Wales**

Redrow House  
Cope Walk  
Cardiff Gate Business Park  
Cardiff CF23 8RH

Tel: 02920 549103  
DX: 141600 CARDIFF GATE  
Email: southwales.customerservice@redrow.co.uk  
Website: www.redrow.co.uk

[REDACTED]  
Economy Infrastructure and Skills Committee  
The National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

Dear [REDACTED]

**Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee**

Further to Redrow's attendance at the Committee held on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2019, I would like to confirm the following, as requested by the Committee:

**Para 155 - Workforce**

Redrow is a significant employer within Wales, providing around 430 jobs, and headquartered in Ewloe, North Wales.

Redrow South Wales also currently employs the services of 138 companies (sub-contractors, suppliers and consultants); 63 of these companies are Welsh, 35 are Welsh branches of national companies, and 40 are based in England. A large number of these businesses are SME's.

The Home Builders Federation estimates that 3.1 jobs are created for every home built, this would suggest that in excess of 1200 jobs are created each year in Wales due to our activities.

**Para 211 - Diversity**

Redrow are keen to support females aspiring to enter the housebuilding industry, and we sponsor a number of events and initiatives each year including the 'Inspire Awards and Summit' that take place in June.

We are also a patron of 'Women in to Construction' and have supported Coleg Menai with female site visits as part of the **#notjustforboys** event. Most recently we have also supported International Women's Day, attending an event hosted by Coleg Cambria for Year 10 girls.

Women comprise 30% of the Redrow Main Board and 30% of the Redrow South Wales Board are female.

Women are now employed within Redrow as trade apprentices, trainee site managers and in areas such as technical and construction teams. There are good percentages of women in professional jobs in our finance, legal, planning and sales teams. Targeted recruitment is underway to entice more female applicants into other areas of the business, both in offices and on site.

## **Para 221 – Apprentice Levy**

In accordance with the current legislation we pay the levy on all of our employees across England and Wales.

In addition to these points, I would also like to add the following information regarding Redrow;

### **Background**

Redrow Homes is a Welsh company with headquarters in Ewloe, North East Wales. Redrow is recognised by the Welsh Government as an Anchor Company and has been operating for 45 years.

### **Stalled Sites Fund**

The Development Bank of Wales eligibility criteria prevent Redrow from accessing the Stalled Sites Fund.

### **Provision of Land for Small Builders**

Redrow has for many years invested in planning and infrastructure to bring forward large sites for residential development, with many SMEs benefiting from this investment. Examples include where St James Parade purchased land at Cwm Calon near Caerphilly, Llanmoor Homes purchased land at Monbank Newport, and an SME housebuilder is currently seeking to purchase land at Plasdwr, Cardiff.

Redrow are currently working with RCT to explore whether small residual land parcels owned by Redrow can be transferred to the Council and used for the Plot Shop initiative.

### **Investment in Apprentices / Other Training Schemes**

Many new entrants to Redrow follow recognised training programmes in line with our published commitment to maintain 15% of our workforce in such roles. Trainee jobs in Wales include;

- 36 trade and business Apprentices
- 7 Graduates Trainees
- 1 Undergraduate
- 5 Trainee Site Managers (following Higher Apprenticeships)
- 21 technical and professional trainees typically pursuing professional qualifications
- 2 Redrow Degree students

Redrow also works with our partners and supply chain to enhance skills in Wales. These initiatives include;

- **Bell Contracting – Groundworks Apprenticeship:** Due to a lack of provision for groundworks apprenticeships we have helped set up an on-site provision for Groundworks at the Redrow site at Cae St Fagans, Pentreban. Bells Contracting have worked with a training provider to set up the onsite school creating a provision for local people. The introduction made by Redrow and the access to a Redrow site has made this possible.

- **V&C (SW) LTD – tiling, plastering, painting and decorating:** We are keen to support our trusted local sub-contract partners such as V&C in Swansea, where Redrow has supported them with construction training at our cost. This demonstrates our commitment to improving quality and investing in skills throughout our supply chain and particularly in local areas and local developments.
- **Coleg Cambria – Redrow Brickwork Training:** Our construction team in South Wales are currently developing a brickwork curriculum to enable students leaving fulltime FE courses to develop their skills to become competent bricklayers. Such youngsters typically struggle to get an apprenticeship. We are working in partnership with the Centre for Welsh Innovation in Construction (CWIC) and Coleg Cambria to develop this and the training will be based on a Redrow Site.

#### **Commitment to Further Education (FE):**

As Redrow is a Welsh company and based in North East Wales Coleg Cambria was chosen as our main FE partner across the business.

Coleg Cambria run closed apprenticeship programmes including quantity surveying, design and civil engineering as well as providing assessment for our business administration and IT apprentices for our Head Office in Ewloe.

Most recently we have worked in partnership with Coleg Cambria, CWIC and Liverpool John Moores University to create the Redrow Housebuilding degree; the only one of its type.

Our Group HR Director is a Governor at Coleg Cambria and is the link Governor there for Equality and Diversity.

#### **Commitment to Local Communities**

Redrow Graduates recently completed a community project in Cardiff, where our current cohort of Graduates, working with some of our sub-contractors and suppliers, carried out much needed improvements to recreational areas at Ysgol Gymraeg Coed Y Gof in Pentreban. The efforts of our team were much appreciated by the school and this demonstrates how Redrow attempt to build excellent, long term relationships with the communities around us.

I trust that this gives some additional context to Redrow's commitment to training, diversity and communities. Should you require any other information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely



Tim Stone  
Managing Director

# Agenda Item 3

Document is Restricted

## Evidence from National Training Federation for Wales

### Introduction

1. The National Training Federation for Wales (NTfW) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this hugely important inquiry.
2. The NTfW is a 'not for profit' membership organisation of over 100 organisations involved in the delivery of apprenticeships and employability skills programmes in Wales. We are a pan-Wales representative body for the network of quality assured work-based learning providers, who are contracted by the Welsh Government to deliver their apprenticeship and employability programmes. All providers who are commissioned by the Welsh Government to deliver work-based learning programmes in Wales are members of the NTfW. As such, the NTfW is seen as the authoritative organisation on apprenticeships and employability skills programmes in Wales.

### Aim

3. The aim of this Submission Paper is to provide evidence to the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee as part of their review into the Regional Skills Partnerships.

### Is the data and evidence being used by the Regional Skills Partnerships timely, valid and reliable? Have there been any issues?

4. The data and evidence being used by the Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs) is valid and reliable, but there are issues in regards to it timeliness. It is clear that much of the data and evidence used by the RSPs is secondary, but what is needed most is primary data i.e. data obtained directly from employers within the regions.
5. There are concerns shown by our members that some of the data is too high a level, and more detailed Labour Market Information (LMI) is required. However, this will take more physical resource to gather, and/or the use of more

robust data, provided by organisations such as EMSI<sup>1</sup>.

How well do the partnerships engage with and take into account the views of those who do not sit on the partnership boards, and how well do they account for the views of the skills providers themselves?

6. It is recognised that all RSPs engage with medium to large employers, and that micro and small employers are engaged with through their representative bodies, most notably the Federation for Small Business (FSB). However, it is clear that there is a lack of engagement directly with micro and small businesses, which is going to be difficult given the level of physical resources at the RSPs disposal.

How do the key City and Growth Deal roles of the Regional Skills Partnerships influence their Welsh Government remit?

7. The emergence of the various City Region and Growth Deals has clearly had an impact on the work of the RSPs. Although, it is good to see that the various bodies have sought to use the existing RSP structures as a vehicle to establish the demand and supply of skills and training. However, what is also clear is that there are emerging tensions between the needs and aspirations of 'regional government' and that of the Welsh Government. This is an area that will need closer monitoring and scrutiny moving forward, if we are to avoid situations of duplication of effort, and/or making the skills system even more complicated for employers and individuals to navigate.

Are the Regional Skills Partnerships able to actually reflect current and future skills demands within their regions? What about very specialised skills for which there may be low volumes of demand?

8. In general, yes. However, some concern is shown by NTfW members that engagement between the RSPs and employers can be too narrow i.e. focused on Welsh Government's priority sectors and to the detriment to 'non-priority sectors' who also have skills needs to be met. In addition, NTfW members would like to

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.economicmodeling.com/>

see more LMI to be generated by the RSPs at a local authority level, as well as a macro-regional level.

9. The NTfW believes that its members are best placed to assist the RSPs in gathering LMI at micro and SME level of employer, as much, if not all, of their provision is delivered directly to employers. This is an area we would be keen to work with each of the three RSPs on moving forward.

**Do the Regional Skills Partnerships have sufficient knowledge and understanding of:**

**a) the foundational economy and the needs of those employed within it?**

10. Unfortunately, not. There still remains a persistent lack of understanding of the 'Foundational Economy' and the skills needs within it. This is understandable, if the limited resources of the RSPs are directed towards establishing the needs within the Welsh Government's 'priority sectors'. There needs to be a clear distinction between 'foundational jobs' and 'jobs within the foundational economy'.

**b) the demand for skills provision through the medium of Welsh?**

11. In terms of skills provision through the medium of Welsh, there is a role that the RSPs can play in establishing what employer demand is, through the various skills surveys undertaken. However, any future work to be undertaken must be in consultation and partnership with the expanded remit of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol.

**Are the Regional Skills Partnerships adequately resourced to fulfil their growing role?**

12. No.

**Is there an appropriate balance between the work of the RSPs and wider views on skills demand?**

13. As outlined previously, much of the attention of the limited resources within the RSPs are focused on 'priority sectors' and higher-level skills. This is at the detriment of lower-level skills, particularly within the 'non-priority sectors'. It is

recognised by NTfW and its members, that businesses and individuals in these areas also have skills needs, but are often over-looked.

Is the level of operational detail set out by Welsh Government for skills provision in higher / further education and work-based learning providers appropriate?

14. Yes, but the RSPs need to work more closely with the responsible for delivering these programmes i.e. work-based learning providers and colleges to understand the demands of delivering them. There is a good model for this within one of the RSPs, where they have established a provider reference group. It is our view that this should be replicated by the others.

If there are any, how are tensions between learner demand / learner progression reconciled with Regional Skills Partnership conclusions and the Welsh Government preference for funding higher level skills?

15. There are tensions in this regard. The main issue here, being that the RSPs need to produce their Employment and Skills Plans, so that they are cost-neutral i.e. there will be winners and losers. However, what is clear is that demand (from employers) is outstripping supply (from providers) so therefore the actual regional demand cannot be met. This is particularly true at the moment with apprenticeships provision, where the impacts of the apprenticeships levy are being acutely felt, and that apprenticeship providers are not able to service the demand from employers, either because of contract restrictions and/or budgetary constraints. In effect, we are asking employers what they want, but failing to deliver. An example of this is the inability to deliver Level 2 provision within 'priority sectors' identified by the RSPs.

Have the Regional Skills Partnerships and Welsh Government been able to stimulate changes in skills provision 'on the ground' to reflect demand?

16. There is recognition that the RSPs have reinforced the needs of the 'priority sectors' over 'non-priority sectors', but NTfW members report that the activity of the RSPs and the Welsh Government has not been to "stimulate" demand in these areas, but that there was already demand in the regions.

What, in general, is working well and what evidence of success and impact is there?

17. With the demise of the pan-UK infrastructure to establish and evidence LMI, in order to influence skills interventions to best effect, it is clear that there is a role for bodies to undertake the functions that were once undertaken by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) and the component Sector Skills Organisations. With the advent of the three RSPs in Wales, we now have the makings of a good infrastructure to undertake this crucial work. However, and as has been discussed elsewhere, the existing bodies are not sufficiently resourced to fulfil this function. That said, there are examples of good engagement between the RSPs and employer forums, as well as good examples of employer 'cluster groups' to inform development.

Are there any aspects of the policy that are not working well, have there been any unintended consequences, and what improvements can be made?

18. Engagement with micro and SME employers is a concern, but an area which could be improved if the RSPs worked directly with work-based learning providers and colleges to access this hugely important element of the Welsh economy.

## Evidence from Universities Wales

### About Universities Wales

Universities Wales (Unis Wales) represents the interests of universities in Wales. Our membership encompasses the Vice Chancellors of all the universities in Wales, and the Director of the Open University in Wales. Our mission is to support a university education system which transforms lives through the work Welsh universities do with the people and places of Wales and the wider world.

### Summary

1. Universities Wales believes that there are benefits to the regional skills partnership model but that the effectiveness of the partnerships would be improved by wider engagement, specialised use of data which would provide for a more forward-facing approach, and a focus on providing for a responsive and flexible skills system rather than a focus on planning provision.
2. In any regional approach to skills, it is crucial that the regional, national and international role of universities in Wales is acknowledged. As well as university staff and students being mobile, the work carried out by our universities is often national and international in scope and delivery. This is particularly important given the valuable economic impact of universities in Wales which generate of £5 billion of output and 49,216 jobs in 2015/16. Compared to other parts of the UK, Welsh universities are of greater relative economic importance to Wales.
3. We also believe that the aim of the employment and skills plans may be better served by operating on a two or three year basis, as per John Graystone's recommendation in his review of regional skills partnerships. Doing so would help provide for greater analysis and longer-term horizon scanning of future skills needs.
4. There would be benefits to engaging with a wider group of stakeholders through regional skills partnerships including the public sector, who are large employers and key parts of the foundational economy, and incorporating the learner voice given the insights that apprentices, learners and recent graduates are able to offer. Similarly, we feel that there should be a greater recognition of student choice in the approach taken by regional skills partnerships.
5. There are opportunities for the regional skills partnerships to play a role in the development of degree apprenticeships in Wales. At various points, each partnership has highlighted the importance of degree apprenticeship development in meeting skills needs. To date, Welsh Government has funded the development and delivery of advanced manufacturing/engineering and digital apprenticeships. We would welcome the opportunity for a wider range of degree apprenticeships, at both level 6 and 7, to be developed to respond to economic need.

## 1. Is the data and evidence being used by the Regional Skills Partnerships timely, valid and reliable? Have there been any issues?

- 1.1 Much of the data and evidence used by the regional skills partnerships reflect existing demand or existing employment in Wales. For example, the data used by RSPs is often drawn from employer surveys, StatsWales, UKCES and other forms of labour market information. There are benefits to each of these approaches. However, there will often be time-lag on the data and in most instances this data will more accurately reflect present demand rather than future demand.
- 1.2 As well as a time-lag in data, it is understood that the future skills needs of Wales are difficult to identify given the pace of technological change and the impact that this is having on the workforce. For example, the Centre for Cities' Cities Outlook 2018 estimated that about 112,000 workers could be at risk by 2030 in Swansea, Cardiff, and Newport alone (Centre for Cities, 2018) and a report by the Wales Centre for Public Policy on the future of work in Wales noted that a third of the Welsh workforce is employed in 'the least productive, lowest paid, and most generic industries that are often considered at highest risk of automation' (Bell, Bristow, & Martin, 2018).
- 1.3 Given this, the level of granularity with which the regional skills partnerships are attempting to engage with skills demands is unlikely to adequately reflect future demand. It is important that any system provides for responsiveness and flexibility, a planned system of delivery is unlikely to keep pace with the requirements of individuals or businesses.
- 1.4 It is also unclear the extent to which the data and evidence used by regional skills partnerships adequately reflects the regional, national and international role of universities in Wales. The importance of RSPs recognising the regional, national and international role of universities is highlighted elsewhere in this response.
- 1.5 In relation to the production of employment and skills plans, we echo the recommendation of John Graystone's review of regional skills partnerships which suggests employment and skills plans, as informed by the data and evidence collected by the regional skills partnerships, may be better served by operating on a two or three year basis. Annual recommendations present challenges in meaningfully collecting and analysing data to consider future skills needs<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.6 We believe that implementing this recommendation would provide regional skills partnerships with the time necessary for a wider collection of data and to utilise many of the data specialisms found across Wales, including in Welsh universities, to interpret and analyse the data.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s80869/CYPE5-33-18%20Paper%20to%20note%201.pdf>

- 1.7 Similarly, we are unsure of the extent to which the regional skills partnerships reflect public sector skills requirements in Wales. Given the size and importance of the public sector in Wales, we would expect any approach to identify skills shortage/demand would need to engage meaningfully with the public sector.
- 1.8 The data and evidence used by the regional skills partnerships would benefit from making greater use of student, apprentice and graduate input. Those who are currently undergoing a work-based learning programme, or who have recently joined the workforce, will be able to offer a useful perspective on the workforce and skills needs of Wales.

## 2. How well do the partnerships engage with and take into account the views of those who do not sit on the partnership boards, and how well do they account for the views of the skills providers themselves?

- 2.1 Universities in Wales have had varying levels of engagement with regional skills partnerships across Wales which may be elaborated on by responses from individual universities. Broadly, we understand there have been a number of positive engagements between the partnerships and universities.
- 2.2 Universities Wales believes an area that could be improved across the regional skills partnerships is the involvement of the learner voice, including apprentices and recent graduates. We believe that the experiences of current or recent learners would help ensure that the recommendations made by regional skills partnerships also reflect the motivations and experiences of those entering the workforce in Wales. For example, where regional skills partnerships are considering the breadth of provision in a region, the experience of those who have gone through study or training could be important in informing those considerations.
- 2.3 We also believe that the partnerships should meaningfully take into account the views of public sector employers who are significant regional employers and often encompass key areas of the foundational economy including in health and social care.
- 2.4 There are also ongoing discussions around Mid Wales including the proposals for a Mid Wales Growth Deal and a separate skills structure. Our members report a need for a clear direction on this issue.

## 3. How do the key City and Growth Deal roles of the Regional Skills Partnerships influence their Welsh Government remit?

- 3.1 No response to be put forward by Universities Wales

#### 4. Are the Regional Skills Partnerships able to actually reflect current and future skills demands within their regions? What about very specialised skills for which there may be low volumes of demand?

- 4.1 Technological advancement and the automation of tasks are set to impact a large number of jobs globally, potentially shrinking employment opportunities in a number of sectors and particularly at lower skills levels. Estimates of the proportion of jobs 'at risk' vary greatly but Wales has a high proportion of jobs in the three sectors deemed most 'at risk': manufacturing, transport and storage and public administration. These three areas alone account for a fifth of the Welsh workforce.
- 4.2 Wales will also undergo large changes in its demography in the next 20 years with the number of people aged 16-64 projected to decrease by 4.2% between 2016 and 2041 and the number of people aged 65 and over projected to increase by 36.6%. Similarly, excluding potential immigration, there will be a decrease in the number of new entrants to the workplace in the next ten years as a result of the current demographic dip in 18 year olds. This presents additional challenges in ensuring that, as the pool of new entrants to the workforce shrinks, there is a sufficiently skilled population to mitigate the risks of automation.
- 4.3 As such, predicting future skills demand is a significant challenge. We do not think that it is possible or desirable for Wales to attempt to plan delivery in response to the significant and difficult-to-forecast changes expected in the coming decades. Instead, the skills system should provide a flexible and responsive environment which will enable providers, employers and individuals to access the skills delivery they need in a timely fashion.
- 4.4 Greater use of specialised skills by the regional skills partnerships to analyse data and to formulate future data collection approaches would help ensure that any recommendations made by the regional skills partnerships are done so in sight of future workplace changes in Wales. Similarly, a two or three yearly cycle, as outlined above in reference to John Graystone's review, would provide the space for the RSPs to operate more strategically and engage with a larger number of stakeholders and employers.
- 4.5 In reflecting current and future skills demands, it is also important that the regional, national and international role of our universities is acknowledged. As well as university staff and students being mobile, the work carried out by our universities, including in research and innovation, is often national and international due to universities' global expertise. In the 2014 Research Excellence Framework exercise, Wales had the highest proportion of world leading research in terms of its impact in the UK<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.uniswales.ac.uk/media/Unis-Wales-response-to-digital-innovation-review-20181102.pdf>

4.6 This is important because universities in Wales have a greater relevant economic importance to the Welsh economy than universities elsewhere in the UK and play a prominent role in the foundational economy through spending by universities, staff, students and visitors. In 2015/16 Welsh universities generated £5 billion of output and 21% of the GVA generated by Welsh universities was generated in local authority areas which do not have a university presence. Similarly, of the 49,216 jobs generated by universities, 11,024 were in parts of Wales that do not have a university presence<sup>3</sup>.

4.7 Understanding the regional, national and international nature of our universities will grow increasingly important in the coming years when, as noted by the Diamond Review, it is likely that there will be a 'shift towards higher qualifications and growth at the higher skilled end of the labour market'<sup>4</sup>.

## 5. Do the Regional Skills partnerships have sufficient knowledge and understanding of:

- o the foundational economy and the needs of those employed within it;
- o the demand for skills provision through the medium of Welsh?

5.1 Universities Wales believes that the Partnerships would benefit from greater engagement with the foundational economy in the regions. Much of the foundational economy is made up of employers in areas such as health, education and social services.

## 6. Are the Regional Skills Partnerships adequately resourced to fulfil their growing role?

6.1 In terms of resource, the reporting demands of an annual set of recommendations means that there is a risk of an overemphasis on generating annual recommendations rather than longer term strategic work. This will limit the amount of resource that can be directed at longer-term work or more meaningful analysis of the data available.

## 7. Is there an appropriate balance between the work of the RSPs and wider views on skills demand?

7.1 As outlined above, we believe that through a move away from annual publications

---

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.uniswales.ac.uk/media/UNI010-Economic-Impact-Report\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.uniswales.ac.uk/media/UNI010-Economic-Impact-Report_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://beta.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-02/higher-education-funding-final-report-en.pdf>

on skills needs and an increased focus on long-term strategic need, the RSPs will be better able to support a flexible, responsive skills system that meets the needs of individuals and employers. Attempts to plan delivery is unlikely to keep pace with the changes in the Welsh workplace being driven by technological advancement.

7.2 We believe that there is also a lack of focus on the wider specialist industrial skills and applied research skills required to contribute positively to Wales' productivity.

7.3 The regional skills partnerships would also potentially benefit from greater engagement with other regional structures such as education consortia, health boards and public service boards.

## 8. Is the level of operational detail set out by Welsh Government for skills provision in higher/further education and work-based learning providers appropriate?

8.1 It is crucial that the regional, national and international dimension of universities is recognised in the work that the regional skills partnerships carry out. For example, the employers that universities work with, and the research and innovation expertise of a university, will often mean that universities in Wales develop research collaborations and industrial partnerships across Wales and more widely.

8.2 Similarly, there is a significant international dimension to the work that universities carry out. In 2014, 46% of Welsh publications were internationally co-authored<sup>5</sup> and Welsh publications were cited 68% more often than the world average. Welsh universities are also host to a large number of international staff and students. There are 22,000 international students at Welsh universities who bring important economic and social benefits to the areas in which they are studying. EU and international staff account for around 10% of the staff cohort of Welsh universities.

8.3 Students who study in Wales play a crucial role in contributing to Welsh GVA and the economy. Welsh universities created 49,216 jobs in 2015/16, 22% of which were in areas which do not host a university<sup>6</sup>.

8.4 In terms of the operational detail of skills provision. As outlined above, the approach taken by RSPs to produce annual recommendations is unlikely to keep pace with the needs of individuals and employers in Wales as producing annual recommendations means that there is limited time for data collection and analysis, or wider stakeholder engagement. We would support a more strategic forward-facing approach that aims to create a responsive and flexible skills system.

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.learnedsociety.wales/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/REF15186-Times-Higher-Publication-Online-PDF.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.uniswales.ac.uk/media/UNI010-Economic-Impact-Report\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.uniswales.ac.uk/media/UNI010-Economic-Impact-Report_FINAL.pdf)

## 9. If there are any, how are tensions between learner demand / learner progression reconciled with Regional Skills Partnership conclusions and the Welsh Government preference for funding higher level skills?

- 9.1 There appear to be tensions between some areas of demand identified by regional skills partnerships and the Welsh Government's priorities. For example, employment and skills plans from across the regional skills partnerships routinely identify degree apprenticeships as a key demand area but Welsh Government has to date limited the development and delivery of degree apprenticeships to Engineering/Advanced Manufacturing and Digital.
- 9.2 Universities report strong and clear demand for higher level skills including degree apprenticeships in Wales. This demand is reflected elsewhere in the UK. For example, England has over 70 different degree apprenticeship standards approved for delivery. In 2017/18 in England there were 6,299 degree apprenticeship starts, so far in 2018/19 there have been 5,446 starts at level 6 and 1,668 starts at level 7.
- 9.3 Similarly, in Scotland for 2019/20 the target number of degree apprenticeship places has increased from 800 to 1300<sup>7</sup>.
- 9.4 It is important that we are able to provide adequate progression routes for people in Wales. As of 2017/18, 19% of all apprentices in Wales are on a higher level apprenticeship. Currently 87% of higher level apprenticeships in Wales (level 4 and 5) are in 'management and business' or 'health and public sector'<sup>8</sup>. The restrictions on what degree apprenticeships can be funded in Wales means that for the majority of higher-level apprentices in Wales there is no clear work-based learning route to a degree.

## 10. Have the Regional Skills Partnerships and Welsh Government been able to stimulate changes in skills provision 'on the ground' to reflect demand?

- 10.1 As outlined above, although various employment and skills plans have called for a broader degree apprenticeship offer, the funding for the development and delivery of degree apprenticeships in Wales currently remains limited to the initial priorities of level 6 digital and advanced manufacturing/engineering.

---

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.itv.com/news/2019-03-02/graduate-apprenticeship-target-rises-to-1-300-places/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://stats.wales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Post-16-Education-and-Training/Further-Education-and-Work-Based-Learning/Learners/Work-Based-Learning/learningprogrammesapprenticeships>

11. What, in general, is working well and what evidence of success and impact is there?

11.1 No response to be put forward by Universities Wales

12. Are there any aspects of the policy that are not working well, have there been any unintended consequences, and what improvements can be made?

12.1 No response to be put forward by Universities Wales

## Evidence from Welsh Language Commissioner

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your inquiry. Our response focuses specifically on issues relating to the role of Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs) in gathering information on the need for Welsh language skills and communicating this information. Although we recognise some valuable work by the Partnerships in this respect, we would like to emphasise the following points:

- We are concerned that the data on Welsh language skills needs that is currently gathered by the Partnerships is not sufficiently comprehensive, with excessive dependence on past research, which has possibly become outdated;
- We believe that there is not enough consistency in attention dedicated to the Welsh language in publications of the individual Partnerships;
- We note that the evidence gathered does not often lead to clear and specific recommendations with regards to the Welsh language;
- We note that the North Wales Partnership promotes the Welsh language proactively but other Partnerships have not undertaken similar activities.

Section 4 of our response proposes a series of recommendations for the Committee to consider on the basis of these conclusions.

### **1** Initial comments

The post-16 education sector and the workplace are crucial for the vitality of the Welsh language and central to the realisation of the ambition of Cymraeg 2050 to increase the use of the language. RSPs have an important and increasing influence over the process of planning of the post-16 education provision and development of the Welsh workforce, including over a number of policy developments of direct relevance to the future of the Welsh language in these two areas (see the footnote for details).<sup>1</sup> Considering this, it is vital that RSPs give comprehensive consideration to the Welsh language, in particular by:

- contributing to creating a strong evidence base for Welsh language skills needs;
- sharing this information effectively.

Our response is based on a review of the main publications available on the Partnerships' websites, in addition to discussions with officers from the Partnerships, Welsh Government and others.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this evidence base. We agree with the Graystone conclusion (March 2018) that it is not always easy to find detailed information on the work of RSPs, including the details of the instructions that they receive from the Welsh Government. Although we are aware that the individual Partnerships are working to address this concern, at present there is no consistency in the number and nature of the publications available on their websites. We trust that the Committee will be willing to use this inquiry to improve the evidence base available.

## **2**     Gathering data on Welsh language skills needs

The Welsh Government sets out its requirements for the work of RSPs in annual remit letters. Although these letters are not available on the Partnerships' websites, we understand based on our conversations with several officers that they did not contain detailed formal requirements for RSPs to consider the Welsh language before 2017. However, some attention to the Welsh language is found also in the Partnerships' outputs prior to that date.

### **2.1**   Data sources

The South West and Mid Wales Regional and Learning Skills Partnership (RLSP) and the South East Learning, Skills and Innovation Partnership (LSkip) use an online questionnaire to gather information from employers. We understand that these two Partnerships use the same set of questions, namely:

- Is the Welsh language important for your business?
- Is the use of the Welsh language in your business increasing?
- Is Welsh medium training important for your business?
- How do you think your business may increase the use of Welsh to match the Welsh Government's priorities (if at all)?

The North Wales Partnership does not use a questionnaire to gather information on the needs of employers at present. However, we know that this Partnership also intends to introduce an employer survey from 2019 onwards.

Rather, we understand that the North Wales Partnership relies on other methods of data gathering, including employer engagement at events. RLSP and LSKIP also hold similar meetings and forums. We have heard from officers from the three Partnerships that consideration is given to the Welsh language within these events. However, few records of these events can be found on the Partnerships' websites. Where they are available (e.g. the [LSKiP website](#)) they appear to contain little specific reference to the Welsh language.

In addition, it appears that every Partnership also depends on existing research. This includes the Census (2011); research report Welsh Language Skills Needs in Eight Sectors (2014); and the Employers Skills Survey (2015). They also rely on [Regional Labour Market Intelligence Reports](#) from the Welsh Government. In terms of the Welsh language, these reports replicate the information from the above research, together with data on registration numbers at HEIs in Wales who study through the medium of Welsh.

## 2.2 The adequacy of the data

It is clear that RSPs gather some very valuable information on the Welsh language. However, we do have several concerns regarding the data gathered:

- We heard on several occasions that the level of response to the Partnerships' surveys is generally low. In terms of the Welsh language specifically, it was also indicated to us that the level of response was low.<sup>2</sup> The position of the questions on the Welsh language (at the end of the questionnaire) and/or the wording of the questions may be influencing factors in this;
- The questions on the Welsh language are rather basic compared to the detailed research in this field, e.g. Welsh Language Skills Needs in Eight Sectors (2014);
- The sectors under consideration vary between the Partnerships. E.g. the research of RLSP covered the education sector in 2016, but not in subsequent years. In 2018, LSKiP focussed on the Construction, Education, Social Care and Tourism sectors, but not on others;
- Rather than gathering new data, observations frequently show that RSPs' conclusions are based on existing research, which has by now become dated.
- As noted previously, it is difficult to assess what consideration is given to the Welsh language in the engagement activities with employers as there is a lack of accessible records.

It is also important to note at this point that a number of stakeholders and mechanisms in addition to RPSs also gather information on employer Welsh language skills needs, together with levels of these skills within organisations. These include:

- Business Wales (Skills Profile)
- Careers Wales (the Education Business Exchange register)
- the National Centre for Learning Welsh (the Learn Welsh Level Checker)

- Qualifications Wales (sector reviews)
- individual colleges (e.g. employers' forums).

My officers also gather data on the private sector and third sector via our promotional activities. In addition, the organisations that operate under Welsh language standards are required to produce annual reports containing data on the Welsh language skills levels of their workforce.

It is important to consider how these efforts reinforce each other to produce a full and consistent picture of Welsh language skills within the Welsh workforce.

### 3 Sharing information on Welsh language skills needs

#### 3.1 Attention to the Welsh language in publications and activities of the Partnerships

Undoubtedly, some consideration is given to Welsh language skills within the Skills and Employment Plans and related publications of the Partnerships. E.g.

- the [North Wales Partnership Plan for 2017](#) gives the Welsh language a prominent place, underlining the relevance and value of bilingualism. Specific aims are set in relation to the Welsh language, including the promotion of Welsh medium apprenticeships. Specific consideration is given to the Welsh language in the Health and Care, and Tourism and Hospitality sectors.
- the [RLSP plan for 2018](#)<sup>3</sup> includes two paragraphs on the Welsh language, together with occasional references in the context of specific sectors where some demand is observed (e.g. Tourism and Hospitality; Creative Industries; Health and Care). In comparison, the [RLSP plan for 2017](#) considered the Welsh language in each sector profile.
- The LSKIP [Cardiff Capital Region Employment and Skills Plan 2017](#) refers to Welsh language skills in the context of the IT sector and the foundational economy. There is also attention to the availability of qualifications in specific sectors, including the Welsh language; and the demand for Welsh speaking teachers. The Welsh language is considered in the [SME Skills Survey in 2017](#)<sup>4</sup> as well as [Business Skills Survey](#) (2018) which looks at the Construction, Education, Social Care and Tourism sectors. The Survey 2018 data with respect to the Welsh language skills is considered in the full annual report by the Partnership to the Welsh Government. The report observes that the findings overall are 'mixed'. However, it is important to note that this report is

not available on the website of the Partnership at the time of writing. Rather, a more concise version (available [here](#)) contains only limited references to the Welsh language.

In addition, there are examples of publications and activities that focus specifically on the Welsh language. E.g.

- The RLSP [published a separate report on the Welsh language](#) (undated, but circa 2014). This report includes data on Welsh medium education and attitudes towards Welsh language skills in the region; statutory requirements and language schemes operated by the main organisations; and information regarding the wider policy context.
- More recently, the North Wales Partnership published [the Welsh Language in North Wales](#) in collaboration with employers, education providers and other stakeholders. My office also contributed to the work. This report includes statistical data, e.g. on the use of Welsh in the statutory and post-16 education sector, and the Welsh language skills needs in the region. There is also a series of case studies from organisations promoting the language across their work; and contributions by the main stakeholders. The report also includes conclusions and recommendations.

We also understand that the North Wales Partnership also actively promotes the Welsh language. The report on [the Welsh Language in North Wales](#) noted that there was a potential to establish a regional forum in order to coordinate the promotion of Welsh across the region. Although it was ultimately decided not to establish a new structure, we know that a detailed action plan was agreed and is currently being implemented, in close collaboration with the School Effectiveness and Improvement Service for North Wales (GWE).

### **3.2 The adequacy of attention to the Welsh language**

As discussed above, the Partnerships' publications include some attention to the Welsh language. However:

- The extent of attention varies from Partnership to Partnership. The North Wales Partnership places the Welsh language at the heart of its publications.

In comparison, the publications of other Partnerships include references to the Welsh language in some sections, but not in others. These references are at times very limited.

- The Welsh language is not considered in every relevant publication. E.g. the language is not considered the [RLSP report on apprenticeships \(2015\)](#).<sup>5</sup>
- The extent of the data gathered and reported on by the Partnerships is not consistent. Welsh language skills needs are not always highlighted in all sectors. Frequently, no clear reference is made to the availability of Welsh medium education or the numbers studying through the medium of Welsh. Rarely is the Welsh language considered in the context of key training programmes such as apprenticeships.
- It is unsurprising therefore that only occasionally do the Partnership formulate clear and specific recommendations regarding Welsh language skills needs in the Skills and Employment Plans (although we note three relevant recommendations in the North Wales Partnership Plan 2017; and one in the LSKIP plan 2017).
- The publications specifically considering the Welsh language represent a very useful method of disseminating relevant information. We particularly welcome the latest publication by the North Wales Partnership. The main strength of the report is that it contains recommendations and action steps and does not solely report on the evidence. However, the report clearly highlights weaknesses of the available data on Welsh language skills needs.
- The North Wales Partnership goes one step further than the others in that it works proactively to promote the Welsh language in the region. No clear examples of similar work by the other Partnerships were observed.

#### **4**     [Conclusions and recommendations for the Committee to consider](#)

It is vital that the planning of Welsh medium post-16 education and training provision is based on up-to-date data. However, we are concerned that the data gathered at present by the Partnerships is not sufficiently comprehensive and that too much emphasis is placed on past research which has by now possibly become outdated.

We also believe that there is a lack of consistency in the consideration given to the Welsh language by the individual Partnerships. We note that the evidence gathered does not often lead to clear and specific recommendations with respect to the Welsh language. We also note that the North Wales Partnership actively

promotes the Welsh language, but the other Partnerships have not undertaken similar activities.

We therefore ask that the Committee to consider recommending that the Welsh Government does the following:

- review the resources available to RSPs in order to gather data on the Welsh language;
- commission research to build upon the findings of the report on Welsh Language Skills Needs in Eight Sectors (2014);
- ensure that the Partnerships as well as any research commissioned give due attention to a wide range of sectors. These should include the sectors that are of particular importance to Welsh speakers, such as the education sector. However, one could argue that Welsh language skills are relevant to every sector and that each and every one contributes to the realisation of the Cymraeg 2050 Strategy;
- review the instructions given to RSPs to ensure that they enable the Partnerships to collect comprehensive data on the Welsh language and promote the language proactively, in line with the Welsh Government's vision for the Welsh language as expressed in Cymraeg 2050 Strategy.

We also ask that the Committee considers recommending that RSPs carry out the following, within their remit as set by the Welsh Government:

- review and ensure the consistency of the data on the Welsh language published in the Skills and Employment Plans and other key publications, so that it is possible to construct a consistent local and national picture of Welsh language skills needs within the Welsh workforce;
- endeavour to consistently formulate clearer recommendations in relation to the Welsh language;
- consider to what extent RLSP and LSKiP could adopt a more proactive approach towards the promotion of the Welsh language.

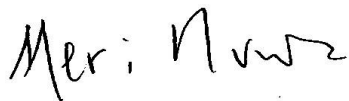
## **5**     Closing remarks

I would also like to emphasise that we have already been in contact with officers from the Partnerships and other stakeholders to discuss such matters as the wording of the surveys, and the potential to ensure consistency and maximise the contribution of other available data sources on Welsh language skills. We are also aware of the commitment by the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to work closely with the Partnerships in using labour market data for planning and

promotion of the Welsh medium provision in further education and work-based learning sector. Improving the capacity of RSPs will be key to the success of this initiative as well as to the realisation of the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 Strategy.

I hope that you find these comments useful.

Yours sincerely,



Meri Huws

Welsh Language Commissioner

<sup>1</sup> The RSPs' Skills Plans directly inform the instructions by the Welsh Government to further education providers (in the form of annual remit letters) and work-based learning providers (through contracts). In addition, we understand that RSPs also communicate directly with the providers in order to address gaps in current provision.

The Welsh Government acknowledges the role of the Partnerships within a number of key policies relating to the future of education and employment, including: Action Plan on the Economy; '[Aligning the Apprenticeship Model to the Needs of the Welsh Economy](#)'; proposals for establishing [a Tertiary Education and Research Commission for Wales](#); and proposals for [adapting the arrangements for the development and approval of apprenticeships frameworks in Wales](#).

Two Partnerships (RLSP and LSKIP) have a role in the City Deals. LSKIP works within the structures of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal. We understand that the RLSP leads on the Skills and Talents Initiative as part of the Swansea Bay City Deal.

<sup>2</sup> LSKIP noted this problem in its full annual report to the Welsh Government 2018 (not on the website of the Partnership at the time of writing )

<sup>3</sup> This report is available on the website in English only.

<sup>4</sup> Prepared for LSKIP by Cardiff and Vale College. The review considered the Advanced Materials and

Manufacturing; Construction; Financial and Professional Services; ITC/Digital (as a crosscutting theme); and the Foundational Economy sector. The research found that there was very little demand by the majority of large companies, and only a low level of demand by smaller companies.

<sup>5</sup> The full report is available on the website in English only.

## Evidence from Chwarae Teg

### Introduction

Chwarae Teg want to create a Wales where women can achieve and prosper; through improving women's representation, improving women's economic position, and reducing the risks posed to women in their everyday lives, from harassment and abuse, to poverty. We work with women and employers to ensure that the potential of their female workforce is maximised, and to promote the benefits – both socially and economically – of diverse and gender balanced organisations. Therefore, the work of Regional Skills Partnerships closely align with our own objectives. We are particularly aware of the changing landscape in Wales in terms of the employment available, and the skills needed for the jobs of the future. We are also aware that women are under-represented in many of the sectors forecast to grow, putting them at risk of being pushed out of the labour market.

We recognise the difficulty and limitations of labour market planning, and that there is no one size fits all approach. We acknowledge the significant challenge RSPs face in their work, therefore the need for adequate resource is essential to enable them to carry out their role effectively – but this resource needs to ensure that the work of RSPs is linking in with wider Welsh Government objectives and stated aims.

### Key messages:

1. We support the principle behind Regional Skills Partnerships. Bringing FE, HE, Welsh Baccalaureate and other skills providers together as well as employers into one place to plan on a regional basis is eminently sensible, and fits into wider Welsh Government objectives. However, there remains the potential, and likelihood, that skills providers and businesses within the regions are competing with each other for learners, employers and profile. The factors that motivate the behaviour of education providers haven't changed, and in a time of stretched resources more work is needed on improving what is prioritised in funding allocations. RSPs need to actively counter this.
2. Our recent research demonstrates that £13.6 billion could be added to Welsh GVA forecasts by 2028 if we can achieve full gender equality. A gendered approach is absolutely essential, and needs to be mainstreamed throughout the work of RSPs to ensure they can play an active role in

tackling the underlying inequality that remains in the Welsh labour market. While all 2018 skills reports acknowledge “gender imbalance”, this seems to be treated as a separate social issue and not integral to the work of RSPs.

3. RSPs must make greater use of gender and equalities disaggregated data, ensuring that a gendered approach is taken in analysis of every sector, identifying the key challenges in those sectors and what can be done to best utilise skills and tackle any inequality within that sector. At the moment, this is inconsistent throughout the work produced by RSPs across different regions
4. Partnership boards need to be representative of people living and working in those regions to be most effective. Therefore, RSPs should ensure gender balanced in their governance and leadership structures.
5. RSPs should ensure that they are aligning their work with WG priorities, such as the Fair Work agenda, particularly considering the growing responsibility of these bodies.

### Detailed Response:

1. To be effective gender equality should be mainstreamed throughout the work of the RSPs and issues such as inequality and social inclusion must not be regarded as a separate social issue or add-on.
  - 1.1. While all recent RSP reports make reference to gender imbalance; particularly in ICT & Digital sectors, Construction, Advanced Materials, Engineering and STEM; gender equality is not being considered as a core issue.
  - 1.2. This separation of gender equality from the work of RSPs was also found in our analysis of 2015 RSP reports, which makes it particularly concerning that the approach does not seem to have changed or improved.
  - 1.3. For example, the CCR Skills Partnership for 2018 states: “This advice has not separately considered wider issues of NEET, BAME, Widening Access, and social inclusion. We would hope that it supports that agenda but is not replacing the need for that to take place”<sup>1</sup>
  - 1.4. RSPs identify ‘skills challenges’ and ‘recruitment and retention’ as key challenges, but fails to recognise the gendered element of those issues, and

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cardiffcapitalregion.wales/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/regional-es-report-2018-final-publishable-version-v1.pdf>

the way that work to address these issues needs to be done through a gender lens.

- 1.5. RSPs need to ensure they are closely linking in with wider Welsh Government agendas, such as the ongoing Rapid Review of Gender Equality, which recommends mainstreaming gender equality, and the work of the Fair Work Commission.
- 1.6. Two examples of where a gender analysis would be helpful in addressed key issues were raised in the South West & Mid Wales RLSP:
  - 1.6.1. The negative perception of certain sectors, such as food and drink – where women are over-represented – were highlighted, and the report recommended the need for more promotion of these sectors with skills providers. The Fair Work board identified the need to address negative perceptions of certain low-skilled sectors, but the RLSP report does not link into this, or more widely consider how this problem can exacerbate inequality. Our own research on decent work looked at issues around negative perceptions of the Food & Drink sector, and the domiciliary care sector.<sup>2</sup>
  - 1.6.2. They also raise the importance of career advice and guidance, and the fact that perceptions – including gender stereotypes – are cemented at a young age. This echoes the findings of our recent report, which interviewed women aged 16-25 about their career aspirations. Despite this being raised in the report, there is not a recommendation for skills providers to actively tackle gender stereotypes for girls and boys across the board.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Are Regional Skills Partnerships using timely, valid and reliable data?

- 2.1. It is crucial that RSPs are using gender disaggregated data to understand the varying experiences of men and women across Wales. This currently appears to be patchy, with disaggregated data in some areas but not others.
- 2.2. This inconsistency can also be found in the Welsh Government regional labour market intelligence reports provided to RSPs – there is a gender breakdown of earnings and population, but not of employment or economic activity/inactivity.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://chwaraeteg.com/research/decent-work/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://chwaraeteg.com/research/bright-report/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://businesswales.gov.wales/skillsgateway/regional-skills-partnerships>

2.3. References to gender pay gap information used in the South West and Mid Wales RLSP 2018 report appears to use data from 2016, which does not provide an accurate picture, as annually updated information is accessible via the ONS Annual Survey of Hourly Earnings, or through our own analysis.<sup>5</sup>

2.4. This gender disaggregated data needs to be provided from the offset to embed a gendered approach to regional skills planning, as different interventions are required to maximise the participation of women and men in the Welsh economy.

2.4.1. RSPs should work more closely with third sector organisations who are already conducting research and collecting this kind of data, and make use of their resources.

2.4.2. Our own work in this area would probably support some of the work of RSPs, including recent reports on Young Women's Career Aspirations, Men's Perceptions of Gender Equality in the Workplace, and a report exploring Decent Work in the Food & Drink and Domiciliary Care sectors.

### 3. How well do RSPs engage with others/those who are not on the participation boards? How well do they account for views of the skills providers?

3.1. We have engaged with Regional Skills Partnerships previously, attending stakeholder events and utilising their reports, particularly LSKIP. However, the recent transition to the RSP falling within the Cardiff Capital Region was not clearly explained to those who engaged with LSKIP, and the information was difficult to access.

3.1.1. Gender balance within Cardiff Capital Region is also very poor, and this is a real concern for the work of RSPs.

3.2. There is not enough clarity about the governance structures and memberships of RSPs, and this information can be difficult to find and vary across the three RSPs. It's crucial for stakeholders to have access to this information in order to understand how RSPs work, and how best to engage. The issues are similar to those highlighted in the Committee's own report from 2017 on City Deals and the regional economy, as highlighted by the Bevan Foundation and Joseph Rowntree Foundation who said; 'the

---

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.rlp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Skills-Plan-2018-6.pdf>

process used to... [engage] with partners and how partners might become involved in the future are all unclear'.<sup>6</sup>

3.2.1. Governance structures need to be made clear and transparent, with consistency across regions wherever appropriate, to enable better scrutiny and engagement from a broader range of stakeholders.

3.2.2. It is also crucial that membership for partnership boards is gender balanced, and represents a range of views and experiences of people living and working in Wales.

3.2.3. The North Wales Economic Ambition Board RSP have much easier to access up-to-date information online, including meeting notes and minutes, which should be replicated in the other RSP. This was also fed back in the Committee's previous inquiry.<sup>7</sup>

3.2.4. However, there is also overall concern about the distinction between the role of City Deals more broadly, and the role of RSPs to ensure that work isn't being duplicated.

3.3. On our Agile Nation 2 business programme, some of Chwarae Teg's employees fed back on their positive interaction with RSPs (in this case, the South West and Mid Wales RLSP) in keeping us informed about priorities in the area. However, staff had received feedback from the businesses/employers that they worked with about their difficulty engaging with their RSPs, and how they felt their concerns weren't always taken on board – particularly around the need for public skills providers to be more flexible in order for businesses to work with them instead of private providers.

3.4. We would like to see RSPs engaging more proactively with equalities organisations, building this engagement into their work plans, and embedding equality into their core work. We would like to see more clarity on how much each RSP engages with those working within the field of equalities. While we have had some limited engagement with certain RSPs over the years, it doesn't seem to be embedded in their approach, nor is it a mainstream focus throughout their reports.

3.4.1. There is a lack of clarity about how regularly RSPs engage with equalities organisations, and it seems that the onus is on those wanting to engage with the RSP, rather than RSPs regularly reaching out to engage beyond their more immediate stakeholders.

---

<sup>6</sup> <http://senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s68161/Report.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <http://senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s68161/Report.pdf>

3.4.2. Without an equalities approach embedded, RSPs cannot provide accurate and useful recommendations to address imbalance and skills gaps in the labour market.

3.4.3. It is worth noting again that the North Wales Economic Ambition Board appears to have a reputation for more success in this area and is better connected with community organisations.

#### 4. Do they have sufficient knowledge of the Foundational economy and the needs of those employed within it?

4.1. At previous events we've attended, there have been discussions of the foundational economy and this is consistent in reports. However, they have failed to address the gendered element of these sectors, and the wider fair work agenda. These priorities need to be properly linked up, and RSPs need to be working closely with the Welsh Government Fair Work Commission.

4.2. Our recent research on behalf of Oxfam Cymru looked at the issue of decent work in the Domiciliary Care and Food & Drink sectors, which we feel would be useful to the work of RSPs.<sup>8</sup>

#### 5. Are they adequately resourced to fulfil their growing role?

5.1. It's difficult to get an accurate picture due to limited information on the structure and governance of RSPs, but it seems unlikely that they are adequately resourced. Given the importance of their role as the link between supply and demand, more resourcing is needed to keep pace with the level of change in Wales.

5.2. RSPs also need to be resourced to closely link in with other Welsh Government priorities such as the Fair Work Commission, the Future Generations Priorities and the Gender Equality Review.

#### 6. Is there an appropriate balance between RSP views and wider views on skills demand?

6.1. Given the leadership role of RSPs in informing skills delivery it's crucial that they are engaging with a broad range of stakeholders, including those with

---

<sup>8</sup> <https://chwaraeteg.com/research/decent-work/>

expertise in gender equality and equalities more broadly so that skills plans are informed by the needs of different populations within the community.

6.2. In order to do this, the capacity and remit of RSPs has to be right and extend beyond just those at the centre of skills provision. A more formalised governance structure will support this.

## 7. Have RSPs and Welsh Government stimulated changes in skills provisions 'on the ground' to reflect demand?

7.1. There is not widely available evidence of this – RSPs should improve their monitoring and reporting of progress made in their identified labour market areas, and improvements in skills provision regionally, as well as other changes. It's particularly important to monitor whether these changes have had an impact on those communities who are particularly distant from the labour market. At the moment it's unclear to us who would have access for this information.

## Evidence from Learning and Work Institute Cymru

Learning and Work Institute Cymru is an independent policy, research and development organisation dedicated to promoting lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion.

### 1. Introduction

Given the current constraints on public finances and the high level of economic change and uncertainty facing our country, it is more important than ever that Wales has an effective skills infrastructure. Over recent years there has been a breaking up of parts of the common UK skills infrastructure and a greater divergence in approaches between England and Wales.

While the creation of a new post-compulsory body to regulate and co-ordinate funding and activity in Wales will be a significant part of addressing challenges in the system, arguably the success of the reform will hinge on effective intermediaries to engage with employers, to develop understanding of local labour markets and to ensure appropriate skills provision is in place to meet demand.

RSPs can and should be the essential, co-ordinating link between 'demand' and 'supply' within the system. It is right that they should operate regionally so that the distinct economic needs of the Wales can be adequately addressed but they should also be focused on supporting providers to meet the distinct needs of local labour markets and in preparing Wales for global drivers of economic change.

However, it is clear RSPs are not sufficiently funded, there is a lack of clarity about their future role within the system and there is a need to improve engagement with a broader range of employers and with other social partners. For these reasons the review by the Committee is a timely and important opportunity to consider their future role and purpose.

### 2. Summary

- a) L&W Cymru believes that RSPs can provide a vital link between post-compulsory providers in Wales and employer demand. However, we do not believe that they are currently resourced sufficiently to undertake this role.
- b) While there is value in the annual employment and skills plans produced by RSPs, we believe the focus for these should be moved to a two to three-year cycle. This would better support providers with planning and reshaping

provision in response to identified demand and ensure investment is focused on meeting future skills needs.

- c) There is a lack of clarity about the future status and role of RSPs. In particular it will be important to clarify the role of RSPs as part of the process to establish the new post-compulsory Commission.
- d) Employers, in particular SMEs, are not sufficiently engaged with and by RSPs. We believe this reflects the lack of resource available to them as well as the broader challenge of engaging and meeting the needs of a diverse business community. It remains a significant challenge and weakness of the current system.

### 3. Resourcing RSPs

We believe there is a broad consensus across much of the sector that RSPs are not adequately resourced to carry out the role expected of them as the intermediary between supply and demand within the skills system. In practical terms, our experience is that the number of people undertaking the work is relatively small, their ability to engage can be limited by this lack of capacity and there are now greater demands on them to help service and support the work of the different City and Growth Deals.

While limited funding is clearly an issue for the whole public sector, the impact of insufficient funding for RSPs is significant in that it could mean wider investment in the post-compulsory sector is not being effectively targeted at meeting the future skills needs of the economy. Unless addressed the resource constraints they face will continue to impact on the breadth of the work they are able to undertake, including their ability to engage with employers and to develop detailed and timely labour market intelligence.

### 4. Labour market intelligence and taking a longer-term perspective

From our engagement with different stakeholders it is also clear that the production of an annual skills and employment plan is not the most appropriate way to develop a picture of need across regions.

Our view, and one we believe is shared by partners across the sector, is that RSPs should prioritise investing in labour market intelligence to offer a medium to long-term perspective and on working with providers to make the system more responsive to identified need.

We do not believe that the current annual cycle gives providers the longer-term perspective they need to shape and to plan provision to meet demand. There will

different views about the appropriate time span of any plan, but we believe a two or three year cycle would be most appropriate. This would balance the need for timely, robust data collection and analysis and give providers time to change and adapt to emerging priorities. Most importantly the plan should be a living document that is flexible enough to respond to emerging demand and changing circumstance.

The analysis and planning processes must also take account of wider strategic priorities. Two specific areas for consideration should be the position of women in the labour market and ensuring a sufficient focus is placed on the needs of disabled people (either in entering or staying in the labour market). RSPs should be resourced and supported to apply both a gender and a wider inclusion perspective to this work.

Also, given the resource constraints on RSPs it is likely many providers will have a more sophisticated and in-depth understanding of their local labour markets. If the intention is for Welsh Government to direct more funding to meet the strategic needs identified by RSPs then they must be adequately resourced to undertake in-depth engagement with employers to develop sophisticated labour market intelligence and to taking a longer-term perspective to help reshape provision.

Finally, there should be a clearer focus from both RSPs and Welsh Government on the potential for progression for adults with low levels of skills and for those already in work to help meet future skills need. It is essential that there remains a focus across all three regions to adults being able to access literacy, numeracy and digital skills and that these are seen as part of a wider progression journey for individuals. There is a risk that the attractiveness of a focus on higher level skills could come at the expense of entry level and lower level participation.

## 5. Engagement by Regional Skills Partnerships

We have a particular concern about the capacity of RSPs to engage with stakeholders in their regions, and in particular with SMEs. This is not to criticise the current engagement activities of RSPs but rather that they should be resourced to undertake more engagement work and to ensure that their perspective is not only informed by the views of those employers with the ability to engage in committee's and processes.

Understanding the perspectives and needs of those not currently engaged with the work of RSPs will be an important part of future proofing our communities, including in the foundational economy. The Learning and Work Institute Participation Survey demonstrates that people are more likely to engage in some form of learning or skills acquisition that is in some way connected to their

employer (either in the workplace or organised in or by work)<sup>1</sup> while evidence from the Federation of Small Businesses shows that many SMEs are making decisions about the skill needs of their staff without engaging with the public sector. Without more direct engagement with employers RSPs will have only a limited picture on which to base their decisions about future priorities and need. We believe a focus for the committee should be to consider whether RSPs are engaging with SMEs effectively and more broadly with the private sector as a whole.

Likewise, more consideration should be given to the formal role of trade unions in engaging with RSPs. Through the Wales TUC there is considerable expertise around the training and skills needs of the workforce across a range of sectors and there should be clear mechanisms for this to feed into the work of individual RSPs.

## 6. Future role and status of RSPs

Across parts of the sector there is a lack of clarity about the future role and status of RSPs. In particular, clarity will be needed from Welsh Government about the role and formal status of RSPs under the new post-compulsory Commission. Specifically, consideration should be given as to whether RSPs should be put on a statutory footing.

Our view is that if funding for providers is to be more closely aligned to the needs identified by RSPs then there should be a mechanism to properly scrutinise the work they do. It may therefore be appropriate to put them on a statutory footing or to make them part of the new Commission.

## 7. Recommendations

- a) The future role and purpose of RSPs should be clarified and they should be resourced appropriately to provide this work. This should be considered in the context of a less coherent UK skills infrastructure and plans to create a new post-compulsory sector Commission in Wales.
- b) The annual skills and employment plan should be replaced with a two or three year, flexible planning cycle. This would better equip providers to shape and plan provision to respond to economic need and help to build greater flexibility and responsiveness into the system.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.learningandwork.org.uk/our-work/promoting-learning-and-skills/participation-survey/>

- c) RSPs should engage in a more detailed and systematic way with employers (in particular SMEs) and draw as well on the expertise of the trade union movement to inform their work.
- d) RSPs should be required and supported to analyse labour market intelligence from both a gender perspective to help support women in work and to support disabled people to enter, stay and progress in employment.
- e) In considering the future skills needs of the workforce, greater emphasis should be given to supporting progression for people already in work, better links with the adult learning sector, and to ensuring that there is adequate investment in entry level qualifications and on the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and digital. These remain the foundations for progression and for addressing inequality and should be a priority for the future.

# Agenda Item 7

Document is Restricted

# Agenda Item 8

Document is Restricted