



Russell George AM
Chair, Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
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24 April 2020

Dear Russell,

Consultation on Valleys Taskforce

Colegau Cymru is pleased to respond to the National Assembly for Wales Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee's consultation on the Valleys Taskforce.

The decision to strip back the delivery plan and focus heavily on a more limited number of areas in the remaining time available until the Taskforce completes is sensible. The rolling out of the RCT Empty Homes Grant Scheme across the Valleys Taskforce area is to be welcomed, although this will understandably, like all other areas of planned work, be impacted by Covid-19. Likewise, the work on developing responsive public transport allowing people to access new or existing employment is both necessary and useful. While this work will also have been disrupted, there is potential positive impact in ensuring key workers in the Valleys Taskforce area are still able to get to work in order to keep services running during the public health crisis.

The alumni programme which forms part of the Delivery Plan is a positive. Coleg y Cymoedd have been involved in, and are supportive of, this. It is important that encouraging young people to engage with role models is not just viewed as a schools activity. This should be integrated with existing Further Education college approaches to alumni and role models across the area covered by the Valleys Taskforce.

In light of the expansion of the area covered by the Valleys Taskforce, greater detail on the skills dimension and plans until March 2021 would be useful. This includes any Welsh language implications. This would enable the Further Education sector to provide support and work together with the Taskforce on the challenges ahead, which will be especially important as we seek to manage responses to the Covid-19 public health crisis over the coming months.

As so many jobs are currently home-based as a necessity of Covid-19, an opportunity now exists to build on this and think about how good quality jobs that were previously office or other location-based can now be undertaken from home, or closer to home, on a more permanent basis. This thinking should help form the basis of legacy-preparation for the Valleys Taskforce.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Rachel Bowen

Director of Policy and Public Affairs, ColegauCymru