

## Cross-Party Group on Digital in Wales Meeting – 16/07/2021

Minutes of the inaugural meeting of members of the Cross-Party Group on Digital in Wales, held on 16/07/2021  
12:30pm via Zoom.

Present:

Rhal	Rhun ap Iorwerth (Chair – MS for Ynys Mon)
PaRh	Pryderi ap Rhisiart (Secretariat – M-SParc)
HW	Huw Watkins (BIC Innovation)
NS	Nick Speed (British Telecom)
KR	Kieron Rees (Universities Wales)
IP	Iestyn Pierce (Bangor University)
BW	Bobby Williams (Loyalty Logistix)
HY	Huw Ynyr (Gwynedd County Council)
CS	Chris Subbe (Bangor University)
PW	Peter Williams (Llywodraeth Cymru)
MB	Mark Baird (Naturiol)
RhH	Rhian Hayward (Aber Innovation)
BS	Ben Scholes (PaperTrail)
CE	Carwyn Edwards (North Wales Tech)
LS	Lois Shaw (M-SParc)
LT	Luke Tyler (Tech Tyfu)
HR	Heledd Roberts (Rhun ap Iorwerth MS' Office)
RhO	Rhodri Owen (Coleg Glynllifon)
AB	Angharad Butler (Brookdale)
VH	Vanessa Higham (Vodafone)
CT	Carolyn Thomas MS
SM	Sarah Murphy MS
NA	Natasha Ashgar MS
CC	Cefin Campbell MS
RD	Ryland Doyle (Mike Hedges MS' Office)
SD	Sophie Douglas (Universities Wales)
DJ	Dewi Jones (Coleg Cambria)
BJ	Ben Jones (Aber Innovation)
CE	Catherine Evans (North Wales Economic Ambition Board)
FfJ	Ffion Jones (Regional Skills Partnership)
PJ	Paul James (O2)

Apologies: DJ Delyth Jewell MS

Agenda Item	Action
<p>1. Welcome and Introduction to the Group.</p> <p>Rhal welcomed everyone to the meeting, including new members. It was noted that the group is a discussion forum for the digital sector, helping to move Wales forward and gain advantages for the community and the economy in the digital sector.</p>	
<p>2. Election of officials and agree on terms of reference</p> <p>Rhal was nominated and seconded by CT and NA and elected as chair. M-SParc's election as Secretariat was approved by CT and SM, with PaRh chosen as M-SParc's official representative.</p> <p>Terms of Reference were noted, with Rhal providing an outline:</p> <p>The Cross-Party Group on Digital in Wales will contribute to ensuring that Wales is well placed to benefit socially and economically from the digital sector. The group will look broadly at digital</p>	

<p>and its role in contributing to a positive future for Wales in areas such as the economy, services, skills and inclusion.</p> <p>Ultimately, the group will seek to promote the digital sector in Wales and its contribution to economic growth including the role of the emerging Digital Strategy.</p> <p>The ToR was also circulated to the group alongside the agenda.</p> <p>It was noted that each meeting will end with a request for the discussion topic for the next meeting.</p>	
<p>3. AgriTech – Opportunities and Challenges for Wales.</p> <p>An introduction to the AgriTech work in M-SParc, AberInnovation and the background to a sector mapping exercise that’s currently underway was provided. PaRh provided an overview of AgriTech. It was noted that the Government is currently working on a piece of work, with Brookdale Consulting, to map out the sector and they will report back on this in September. Workshops will be held over the next few months to understand the picture better.</p> <p>M-SParc is building an AgriTech cluster, which has happened organically with companies undertaking exceptional work in the sector. The website, agritech.cymru was shown, where members of the cluster can be seen and others can register.</p> <p>RhH presented on behalf of Aber Innovation, noting that AgriTech is a fast-emerging area, and providing an overview of Aberystwyth’s 100+ years’ experience in agriculture research. R&amp;D at Aber Innovation is providing further opportunities to support AgriTech research, and there is certainly space to highlight and attract more AgriTech companies to the region. IoT technology, Access satellite data for companies, and evaluating concepts are all examples of Aber Innovation’s support in this sector. The gap between students graduating and being ‘work-ready’ was discussed and mentoring within businesses for these graduates was noted as a favourable solution.</p>	
<p>4. Discussion following the presentation</p> <p>PaRh noted that long-term investment in the sector, as well as a long-term vision, is required. Comparisons were made with AgriTech and the meat industry; which of course is thriving in Wales. One thing holding the sector back is the skills gap to drive projects forwards.</p> <p>RhH noted that ROI is hard to justify with such a small footprint of land in the region. Working with a supply chain or a food retailer who wants a particular technology adopted by a supply chain, this improves this more quickly. Having to choose before digital services, and lamb and beef is not a choice to make – using technology to improve productivity is the goal.</p> <p>AB mentioned Brookdale Consulting are looking at the technological capabilities and what is driving change and development to make use of what is available. Regulatory and environmental pressure exist, but also economic benefits of enhanced productivity.</p> <p>BS asked for baseline for the report – there are existing data baselines, and what they are doing now is focus on broader implications and what’s happening from research institutions and businesses.</p>	
<p>5. Next steps</p>	

Rhal informed the group that he will write to the Welsh Government, asking for their feedback on the direction they see AgriTech taking. The response will be shared with this group as a starter for taking the conversation forwards.

Suggestions of subjects for the next meeting will be shared via e-mail. To give feedback to the group, Rhal encouraged members to e-mail himself, and a way to disseminate the information and responses between the groups will be put in place.