

1. A Growth Deal for Mid Wales

- 1.1 Growing Mid Wales is an inclusive regional economic partnership and engagement arrangement between the public, private and third sector, one of four that cover Wales. The initiative, which was first established in 2015, seeks to represent the region's interests and drive forward priorities for improvements to our local economy. The partnership's purpose is to enable the region to fulfil its role as the rural powerhouse of Wales.
- 1.2 GMW is fully committed to developing a growth deal approach for Mid Wales, and believes such a regional approach to economic development is vital because of the distinct nature of the economy in Mid Wales – the structural dependence on agriculture, the dispersed population, the historically low rates of productivity and the high proportion of SMEs. These factors are rarely found elsewhere on such a large scale and the distinct economic situation of the region has been recognised in previous government policy with organisations such as the Development Board for Rural Wales.
- 1.3 In a national context, a growth deal for Mid Wales would mean a consistent approach across Wales in relation to both financial support and devolution of powers to the regions.

2. Sector Deals

- 2.1 Because of our region's rural character, we are aware of the possibility that rural sector deal package may be developed across UK. The region already levers in significant investments from UK government and its agencies (for example BBSRC and InnovateUK) and there are other regional initiatives in the sector, (such as the Agri-Tech West Alliance in England). We are discussing with key stakeholders and seeking to be party to emerging 'deals'.

3. Regional Inequalities

- 3.1 GMW welcomes and supports the WLGAs recognition of Inclusive Growth as central to future regional development in Wales, and the key role the Well-being of Future Generations Act can play in providing a framework for activity. A more equal and cohesive Wales cannot be achieved if all regions are not given the same opportunities for prosperity and growth – this includes access to local growth deals.
- 3.2 It would also be impossible to achieve a cohesive nation without investing in the centre of the country that connects it all together – the Mid Wales region. This

region has historically been subject to lower levels of investment, and no growth deal investment would only exacerbate the existing situation.

3.3 It will be vital for all four economic regions within Wales to work together in order to ensure the maximum outcomes for their own individual regions – regions are developing their own priorities based on the opportunities present, and the sharing of information will be vital to ensure balanced economic development across the whole of Wales.

3.4 GMW is currently developing a programme based approach based on the significant sector-based opportunities in the region – namely Defence and Security; Animal Health and Veterinary Science; and Biotechnology and Agri-Tech – but we are also fully aware of the need to take account of inequality issues within our region. Investment in infrastructure, including digital infrastructure, in Mid Wales lags behind that in other economic regions, further exacerbating existing issues in terms of both businesses accessing markets and residents accessing services. Investment in strategic transport corridors is therefore vital. There are also issues around equity of access to quality FE opportunities in the county, with many post-16 students choosing to travel over the border into England or to other Welsh regions.

4. Fit with Welsh Government Strategy

4.1 Growing Mid Wales has an established working relationship with Welsh Government, and is fortunate to have WG as a member of its inclusive partnership and benefits from significant input from WG Economy, Transport, Regeneration and Rural Affairs. GMW has worked closely with WG, the WLGA and other economic regions within Wales to help determine the early role of regional economic partnerships in an emerging post-Brexit landscape. Growing Mid Wales wishes to continue this work and further develop our understanding of how best to ensure national WG initiatives interact with, and relate, to regional activities in partnership with the recently established WG Regional Alignment Board.

4.2 We would highlight that it is currently difficult to comment on the degree to which growth and city deals co-ordinate with WG strategy as we are awaiting the publication of the four new cross-cutting national strategies - Prosperous and Secure, Healthy and Active, Ambitious and Learning and United and Connected. However, GMW generally welcomes the recognition of the need to change WG economic development structures to work in closer partnership with the regions, and hopes that other WG policy areas will adopt a similar regional outlook in their work.

4.3 Growing Mid Wales also recognises the importance of working closely with UK Government Departments to ensure that Wales maximises opportunities from other

key UK Government-led funding initiatives in addition to the Local Growth Fund, such as the recently proposed Industrial Strategy. We recognise the need for WG and UK Government to work closer together to provide arrangements fit for purpose both in terms of policy and delivery, and also to work in conjunction with regional economic partnerships in Wales to ensure parity of esteem with LEPs.

The Growing Mid Wales Partnership would welcome the opportunity to discuss the region's plans and answer questions on the situation and opportunities in mid-Wales.

Background

Growing Mid Wales:

- 1. A regional economic partnership and engagement arrangement between the public, private and third sectors for mid-Wales and was established in 2015.*
- 2. One of four recognised economic regions which cover the whole of Wales.*
- 3. Represents the region's interests and drives forward priorities for improvements to our regional economy.*

*The Partnership's overarching goal is to establish the region as **the rural powerhouse of Wales.***