

## 1. Overview

- 1.1. The Growing Mid Wales Partnership welcomes the opportunity to provide an update to the NAFW Economy Infrastructure and Skills Committee's inquiry into City Deals and the regional economies of Wales.
- 1.2. In October 2019 an announcement of £55 million for a Mid Wales Growth Deal was announced by UK Government. Growing Mid Wales recognises the need to respond to the challenge by both Governments to develop our Growth Deal proposal at pace. Whilst the timescales are challenging, we are currently producing a proposition document to articulate our regional vision and ask by the deadline of March 2020. It is therefore timely to provide an update to the EIS committee on progress.

## 2. Progress

- 2.1. Since last providing evidence to the committee in early 2018, significant progress has been made in developing a regional vision for Growing Mid Wales. Significant pieces of work have been undertaken to help shape regional proposals and ensure the proper foundations are in place to deliver a successful future programme of regional investments, including a Mid Wales Growth Deal.
- 2.2. Work to date includes the production of a Strategic Economic Priorities Report and Economic Baseline Report by AECOM, and a series of Growth Deal Workshops in Spring 2019. A lot of work has also gone into various one-to-one discussions and ongoing engagement with key stakeholders.
- 2.3. Current commissions in progress to provide a solid evidence base for interventions in the region include a Mid Wales Employment Sites and Premises Assessment and Action Plan. Growing Mid Wales are also working closely with WG Energy Service and The Carbon Trust on the formation of a Mid Wales Energy Plan.

## 3. Workstreams

- 3.1. Building on this evidence base and extensive engagement, we recognise further work is required to shape the regional narrative we have developed to date into tangible proposals for investment. Broad thematic areas have been identified around which to organise and structure thematic work streams, to develop detailed thinking and start shaping proposals.
- 3.2. The work streams identified at present are:
  - Advanced Research & Innovation (Radio Spectrum, Agri & Bio Innovation, Advanced manufacturing, Hydrogen etc.)
  - Energy (Low Carbon, Hydrogen and Circular Economy)
  - Tourism
  - Food
  - Skills
  - Connectivity (Transport & Digital Infrastructure)



- Business (Support, Sites & Premises)

#### **4. Governance**

- 4.1. Under the Inter Authority Agreement agreed on the 20<sup>th</sup> November 2019, the two Local Authorities have agreed to establish a Joint Committee for the purpose of establishing good and clear governance around the development of an OBC for the Growth Deal and for approval of Heads of Terms with the WG and the UK Government. The Authorities have also agreed that at present there will be no host authority and that the Joint Committee will operate on a joint partnership basis, dividing host authority functions equally between the two Local Authority partners. The IAA will be formally signed at the Joint Committee due to be held on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January.
- 4.2. It is recognised that a further and more detailed Inter Authority Agreement will be required once the Heads of Terms for the Growth Deal have been agreed by the Authorities, the WG and the UK Government.

#### **5. Scrutiny**

- 5.1. It has been agreed a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be required to oversee the work of Growing Mid Wales with regards to the Growth Deal. It is recognised by all partners that establishing proper scrutiny arrangements at the outset of the process is vital. The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be responsible for scrutinising the work of the Joint Committee, including the development of Growth Deal projects and monitoring progress and outcomes.

#### **6. Economic Strategy Group**

- 6.1. An Economic Strategy Group consisting of key employers from the region has been established to provide strategic direction and oversight on the Mid Wales Growth Deal. The Chair of the ESG will attend Joint Committee meetings in an advisory capacity. Fiona Stewart, director of The Green Man Festival, has recently been selected as Chair of the ESG following a nomination process.

#### **7. Regional Programme Office**

- 7.1. The Growing Mid Wales Joint Committee has agreed the approach to establishing a Programme Office to support the management and delivery of regional activity for Growing Mid Wales. The Committee has also authorised officers to submit a bid for revenue funding from Welsh Government, and to design a complementing bid for ESF funding. Discussions are currently ongoing with Welsh Government regarding both streams of funding and ensuring alignment with evolving WG regional structures and work.

#### **8. Wider Regional Vision and Policy Context**



- 8.1. The region is clear that it needs to work with both Welsh and UK Government in articulating its broader vision for economic growth across the region. The Growth Deal will form a key part of realising and complementing this vision as part of a broader funding mix. It requires a galvanising of shared priorities and interests to ensure the region succeeds not only in developing a credible Growth Deal proposition, but also positions itself strongly within and evolving policy and funding framework.
- 8.2. There is recognition this work sits in a very rapidly changing policy landscape. Growth Deals in Wales are, by their very nature, a fluid environment which vary from one deal to the next. There is no “set template” how to bring forward a Growth Deal and each Deal in Wales is different. The strategic and institutional context will differ, so will the political and policy context as these deals are brought forward in different timeframes.
- 8.3. There are also uncertainties surrounding the future of regional investment, both in terms of funding source and scale of funding available. Both the policy and funding landscape has the potential to be dramatically different in just a few years’ time, and our regional programme will need to be both robust and flexible enough to meet these challenges.