



UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Carmarthenshire Local Investment Plan

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is a central pillar of the UK government's Levelling Up agenda and will provide funding over the next 3 years up until March 2025. All areas of the UK will receive an allocation from the Fund via a funding formula rather than a competition. Its mix of revenue and capital funding can be used to support a wide range of interventions to build pride in place and improve life chances.
- 1.2 The UKSPF total for the region is made up of 'core' funding, which will fund most of the Fund's Priorities and the Multiply programme which focuses on supporting adult numeracy initiatives. The allocation for each of the local authorities across the region is as follows:

	Core UKSPF	Multiply	Total
South West Region	£113,985,414	£17,970,430	£131,955,844
Carmarthenshire	£32,002,918	£5,045,437	£37,048,355
Neath Port Talbot	£28,448,295	£4,485,031	£32,933,326
Pembrokeshire	£19,125,971	£3,015,315	£22,141,286
Swansea	£34,408,230	£5,424,647	£39,832,877

- 1.3 This funding will be invested across three priorities of the UKSPF by 31 March 2025:
- Communities and place: to enable places to invest to restore their community spaces and relationships and create the foundations for economic development at the neighbourhood-level, to help strengthen the social fabric of communities, supporting in building pride in place.
 - Support for local businesses: enabling places to fund interventions that support local businesses to thrive, innovate and grow.
 - People and skills: funding to help reduce the barriers some people face to employment and support them to move towards employment and education. Places can also target funding into skills for local areas to support employment and local growth.
- 1.4 The Programme is broader in scope than previous EU funds, but with a considerably reduced budget like for like. The Programme cannot be used to replace statutory provision.
- 1.5 In Wales, UK government supports delivery across the four regional strategic geographies on the economic development footprint. Local government has been given responsibility for developing a regional investment plan for approval by the UK government, and for delivery of the Fund thereafter. A 'lead local authority' for the region will receive the Region's allocation and have overall accountability for the

funding and how the Fund operates. Swansea Council has been nominated to act as the lead Authority on behalf of the South West region.

2.0 Regional Investment Plan

- 2.1 In order to access their allocation, lead local authorities have been asked to complete a Regional Investment Plan, setting out how they intend to use and deliver the funding at a very high level. This investment plan was submitted to UK government in August 2022.
- 2.2 Due to the short timescales involved, each local authority prepared a local investment plan which has fed into this wider Regional Investment Plan for South West Wales.
- 2.3 This Local Investment Plan document needs to be considered in conjunction with the Regional Investment Plan when submitting applications for funding to Carmarthenshire
- 2.3 Approval for the Regional Investment Plan was received from UK Government on the 5 December 2022

2.0 COMMUNITIES AND PLACE INVESTMENT PRIORITY

2.1 Local Challenges

Main Challenges:

- **Access to services is a challenge in some instances owing to a lower population density and rurality.**
- **An above average level of those considered to be in marginalised groups – including an ageing population, significant numbers of households living in poverty and higher than average levels of those living with disabilities or long-term limiting health conditions (including mental health).**
- **Increasing crime rates in some areas.**
- **Key strategic sectors recovering from the effects of the pandemic, specifically the Tourism, Leisure and Culture sectors.**
- **Areas of the county are susceptible to the negative effects of the climate emergency, especially flooding.**
- **Town centres attempting to recover from periods of decline.**

Carmarthenshire is characterised by a relatively high number of sparse settlements anchored by three main towns; Carmarthen, Llanelli and Ammanford. Home to over 190,000 people¹ it is the 4th largest county in Wales in terms of population size and exhibits a comparatively low population density of 80.2.

Carmarthenshire's topography is one that creates a number of challenges and subsequent opportunities, the most pertinent are explored below in the context of some key themes;

Rurality

Carmarthenshire's rurality is one of its defining features, not least because it is estimated that 61% of the population live in rural areas² but also because it serves to create a natural landscape that is synonymous with Carmarthenshire's identity as a place. Rurality can pose several challenges for areas, however, one of the most pertinent in a Carmarthenshire context is the delivery of services and the subsequent access to those services. The main contributory factors to this increased pressure are detailed below;

- Lower population densities make achieving relative economies of scale difficult, this can include a low number of customers for services to support, making delivery costs expensive as well as limiting potential engagement opportunities.
- Large travel distances increase the time and cost for accessing services, this can hinder an individual's ability to feel connected to their communities, worsen isolation and reduce feelings of local pride and belonging. This is especially pertinent for marginalised groups.
- Poor digital connectivity and issues with 'the last mile of connectivity' remain a significant challenge for many in our most rural areas, although this has improved somewhat in recent years.³

¹ [Population estimates by local authority and year \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/population-estimates-by-local-authority-and-year)

² Exploring the Innovation Prospects for Carmarthenshire -

³ [Regional Employment & Skills Plan 2019 WEB \(flipbuilder.com\)](https://flipbuilder.com/Regional-Employment-Skills-Plan-2019)

In recognition of these challenges the ten towns initiative was created to focus specifically on supporting the recovery and growth of rural towns and their surrounding areas. Individual plans created for each of these towns highlight opportunities to enhance physical, cultural and social ties and amenities through focusing investment to create quality places that people want to live, work, play and learn in.

Marginalised Groups

Low Income Groups

The most recently available data suggests that 35.6% of all households in Carmarthenshire are living in poverty⁴, a level which has increased by 0.9% over the last ten years. This translates to around 29,444 households, suggesting that a further 582 households have slipped below the income threshold over the last ten years.⁵

24 wards in Carmarthenshire exhibit higher poverty levels than the county average suggesting that the effects of poverty and the cost-of-living crisis may be more acute in these areas. These wards largely coincide with those identified as being most deprived in the most recent Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation.

There are clear opportunities here to deliver targeted community-based interventions to address the likely challenges being experienced in these areas.⁶ This not only includes ensuring that these groups have access to wellbeing enhancing facilities and open spaces, but also extends to involvement in and benefiting from community-based measures to reduce the cost of living.

Older Population

Carmarthenshire has an ageing population, whereby 11% of the county's population are aged over 75 (above the national average of 9.7%). This ageing population can place additional pressures on services, therefore helping people to age well and lead as independent lives as possible is both a challenge, and an opportunity.

A key consideration in this regard is ensuring that older people have access to existing cultural, historic and heritage institutions to counter the effects of isolation. This extends to ensuring that older people have access to local sports facilities to enjoy appropriate and relevant activities to increase wellbeing.

In addition, the rates of older people in poverty are increasing, thought in part to be as a result of individuals entering retirement with insufficient savings or earnings. This is made worse by the rising cost of living and compounded by the fact that pensioners have very little opportunity to increase their income to counteract these effects. Evidence also indicates that pensioners

⁴ Household income totals less than 60% of the GB median income

⁵ CACI Paycheck Data - 2021

⁶ Tyisha, Felinfoel, Llwynhendy, Ammanford, Glanymor, Quarter Bach, Llandovery, Dafen, Bigyn, Carmarthen Town South, Glanamman, Burry Port, Trimsaran, Lliedi, Llanybydder, Garnant, Kidwelly, Pontyberem, Elli, Cenarth, Carmarthen Town North, Pontaman, Llanfihangel ar Arth, Trelech.

are least likely to check what benefits they are entitled to. It is therefore imperative that older people are able to benefit from community-based measures to reduce the cost of living.

Disability and Health Conditions

Carmarthenshire is home to an above average level of individuals with disabilities or limiting health conditions. It is particularly important therefore, that consideration is given to ensuring that these individuals are able to make positive contributions to their local communities and enjoy the services and activities available. There are opportunities here to ensure that improvements made to existing (or the creation of new developments) are designed with these individuals in mind. This is both an access issue and a relevance issue.

In addition, individuals from this group are more likely to be detrimentally affected by the cost-of-living crisis and therefore there are opportunities here to support these individuals through inclusion in developments designed to counter these affects (as noted above).

Since the onset of the pandemic, there has been an increased complexity in support needs seen with mental health issues, contributing to individuals needing longer and more intense periods of support.

There is much evidence which substantiates the positive impacts that the natural and built landscape can have on wellbeing, serving to counteract the sometimes-devastating effects of mental health issues for individuals and their families. There are clear opportunities here for consideration to be given to the design of community-based interventions and in improvements made to the accessibility of these services.

Environment & Green Developments

The climate and nature emergencies are not challenges exclusive to Carmarthenshire, however there is an appreciation that Carmarthenshire's natural landscape lends itself well to Green developments and that more can and should be done to capitalise on these opportunities. The ambition is to create low carbon and climate-resilient infrastructure, scope potential sites for renewable energy generation at a local level and develop a skills base and subsequent workforce primed for the Green economy. This is aligned to (but not limited to) the aforementioned ten towns initiative.

Specific areas of the county are susceptible to flooding during periods of high rainfall, the effects of which have been devastating for those communities affected. Against the backdrop of a worsening climate emergency there are clear opportunities here to improve infrastructure through community and neighbourhood interventions to improve resilience in this respect.

There is a further opportunity to harness the potential of the circular economy in which its approaches are a key element of the net zero agenda but have many elements (from re-fit, repair, re-making through sustainable design and manufacture to considerations of natural resources and land use). In addition, the circular economy approach can also be used to engage citizens and raise awareness of climate change and the decarbonisation agenda.⁷ There are clear opportunities here to explore the viability of such an approach in Carmarthenshire.

⁷ Exploring the innovation prospects for Carmarthenshire

In addition, the county's comparatively low population density and topography suggests that there are opportunities to create and improve existing green spaces with a particular consideration given to how access to these are improved for marginalised groups, specifically those indicated above.

Tourism, Leisure & Culture

Tourism and cultural activities are an important driver for the county, both in terms of employment and economic contribution. Prior to the pandemic the county saw a record year for Tourism with over 3 million visitors generating over £515 million for the local economy. In this respect the county does well to take advantage of the attractive natural landscape available but there are opportunities for further growth.

These opportunities relate specifically to strengthening what is a local brand (building on what has been coined as 100% Sir Gar) and focussing on making the experience economy relevant and accessible to all. This is especially important in fostering a sense of pride in place for local people but also in making Carmarthenshire an attractive place to stay in the first instance but also return to time and time again. This would improve the resilience of the sector and subsequent businesses, people and institutions which rely on the visitor economy. Research also shows that leisure and cultural activities are key to ensuring we have positive well-being and help alleviate loneliness and provide a sense of purpose. Increasing access to such facilities is also a key priority for the County.

Access to Services

21.4% of the County's Lower Super output areas are identified within the top 10% most deprived in relation to access to services (Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019). This is largely due to the rurality of the County. The third sector plays a significant role in delivering services and reaching vulnerable residents within the County which has been particularly evident during the pandemic. There are opportunities to expand and build on the third sector's role in delivering effective and resource efficient services and to further support structural changes within the sector.

Crime

The county remains one of the safest areas in the UK, with Carmarthenshire ranking 9th safest out of the 22 counties in Wales with a rate of 65.18 crimes per 1,000 population.

However, of the 10% (190) most deprived Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Wales, six are within Carmarthenshire in terms of Community Safety. Not surprisingly these cover the three community areas of our biggest three towns; Llanelli, Carmarthen and Ammanford.⁸ There are opportunities here to develop targeted community-based interventions which focus on those areas of greatest need. This extends to taking advantage of the built and landscaped environment already available and exploring ways that these can be used to find innovative solutions to reduce crime, especially anti-social behaviour.

Town Centres

Our three main towns; Ammanford, Llanelli and Carmarthenshire as well as our rural market towns serve as important economic drivers and are considered anchors in terms of creating a sense of place in the county. Following periods of decline (a situation worsened by the

⁸ [1-well-being-assessment.pdf \(thecarmarthenshirewewant.wales\)](#)

pandemic), improving the vibrancy of these town centres is a clear opportunity. Investment to this end will increase visitor numbers and create a sense of inclusivity, especially with regard to the marginalised groups referred to previously. This is also important from an economic development perspective and has strong alignment to the supporting business investment priority.

Welsh Language

A key overarching theme to be considered in the capitalisation of the opportunities mentioned above is the Welsh language. This extends to the protection, promotion and facilitation of the Welsh language in everything that we do, recognising its importance in creating a sense of place for Carmarthenshire and its people. This is in line with the Welsh Government's ambition to have 1 million people in Wales speaking Welsh by 2050 and more local strategic ambitions at a Carmarthenshire level.

2.2 Local Opportunities

In addition to the local opportunities detailed alongside the challenges in the section above, there are many opportunities identified in the national, regional, and local strategies listed below, that will help address the challenges that Carmarthenshire faces.

South West Wales Regional Economic Delivery Plan

Mission 1: A UK leader in renewable energy and the net zero economy

Looking to 2030, we aim to make South West Wales a UK leader in renewable energy. That means taking advantage of our natural assets and our industrial and R&D capabilities to build an internationally-significant presence in future fuel technologies and to drive the decarbonation of our industrial base and the wide economy

Key Actions:

- Additional Capacity to drive forward the agenda
- Progressing the region's major renewable energy generation projects
- Attracting and driving forward industrial investment
- Decarbonising transport and the housing stock

Mission 2: Building a strong, resilient, and embedded business base.

"Business is at the centre of our strategy to 2030. It will be through the expansion of existing firms and the start-up and attraction of new ones that new employment will be generated and productivity growth secured. That means supporting sustainable business growth – both at the 'leading edge' of technology and innovation and across the economy"

Key Actions:

- Accelerated adoption and innovation support (linked with the recommendations of Wales 4.0 in relation to business, skills and innovation support)
- 'Progressive procurement' within a local business and supply chain development system

Mission 3: Growing and sustaining the South West Wales ‘experience’ offer

“South West Wales enjoys a superb environment and a unique ‘quality of life’ offer. This is a key asset for the region, and one which we must protect and enhance. We will make South West Wales known for the quality and breadth of its ‘experience’ offer’, bringing together urban and rural environmental quality, ‘quality of life’ and culture. This will support a high-value visitor economy – but it will also be locally owned and a central part of our investment proposition”.

Key Actions:

- Targeted and coordinated capital investment, including in town and city centres
- Balancing of initiatives at a regional, local and community-driven scale

A Framework for Regional Investment in Wales (FRIW)

- **Priority 1: More Productive and Competitive Businesses**

“We want to drive recovery and prosperity by supporting entrepreneurs, start-ups and businesses to create and retain sustainable jobs that reflect the principles of Fair Work Wales. We will help businesses to take advantage of opportunities to grow and strengthen the productivity and competitiveness of businesses and social enterprises of all sizes, particularly micro to medium sized businesses. This includes supporting businesses in their efforts to create or improve their share of the export market”

- **Priority 2: Reducing the Factors that lead to Economic Inequality**

“We want to maximise the number of people able to participate in good quality, sustainable work, for which they receive fair pay, ensuring this is shared fairly across geographies and demographics, particularly amongst under-represented groups. Evidence³⁹ shows that inequality has a negative impact on economic growth and social outcomes. In the short term we will focus our efforts on supporting those who have been most adversely affected by the economic impact of the Covid pandemic, notably young people, those in low paid and insecure employment, women, black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups, and disabled people”

- **Priority 3: Supporting the Transition to a Zero-Carbon Economy**

“The climate crisis is the global challenge of our age. The risks are real for every citizen and business but are greatest for those who are already at a socio-economic disadvantage. The transition to a zero-carbon economy will bring opportunities for clean, energy efficient economic development, quality jobs and global market advantages, as well as benefits to our environment, our health, our natural capital, and our ecosystem services”

- **Priority 4: Healthier Fairer, more Sustainable Communities**

“A workforce that is healthy and happy, and well-connected communities that are strong and resilient, are economic assets which benefit everyone. The link between well-being and economy has never been clearer. We want to help ensure that communities of place and of people have the resilience and structures they need, so that the people living here can live long, happy lives and fulfil their potential to contribute productively to our economy and society”

Carmarthenshire Economic Recovery and Delivery Plan (CERDP)

- **Theme 1 - Business**
“Safeguarding our existing businesses, supporting new start-ups and growing businesses in our foundational and growth sectors to become more productive and competitive”
- **Theme 2 – People**
“Protecting jobs, responding to significant expected unemployment, helping people gain the skills needed for the jobs that will exist, and creating new and better-skilled employment”
- **Theme 3 – Place**
“Ensuring a fair distribution of opportunities through investing in the infrastructure and adaptation of our strategic growth areas, town centres, the rural economy and regenerating our most deprived communities”

Four cross-cutting priority ambitions:

- Ultra-reliable digital connectivity, digital culture and skills – improving connectivity, tackling the associated challenges to deployment and intervening to make improvements in digital connectivity both now and for the future.
- Skills - supporting people and businesses to retrain, re-skill, and up-skill through blended traditional, online and work-based learning.
- Green economy – adding economic value through keeping resources in use and where waste is avoided, invest in low carbon and climate-resilient infrastructure, renewable energy and sustainable homes.
- Fair and equal economy and support for the Welsh language and culture – supporting peoples culture and well-being with local, fair, decent and secure employment

Exploring the Innovation Prospects for Carmarthenshire (EIPC)

The purpose of this study was to review the current position of Carmarthenshire and to inform CCC’s local innovation strategy in the coming years. The following 4 opportunities conclude the report and have been derived from consultations with stakeholders and documentary analysis:

- **Opportunity 1** - Digital: Enhancing Digital connectivity and exploiting Digital opportunities across Carmarthenshire
- **Opportunity 2** - Health: Development of a dispersed living laboratory
- **Opportunity 3** - Foundational Economy: Sustainable food procurement
- **Opportunity 4** - Circular Economy: Leveraging a CE approach for the Net Zero Agenda

2.3 UK SPF OUTCOMES COMMUNITIES AND PLACE INVESTMENT PRIORITY

Jobs created
Jobs safeguarded
Increased footfall

Increased visitor numbers
Reduced vacancy rates
Greenhouse gas reductions
Improved perceived/experienced accessibility
Improved perception of facilities/amenities
Increased number of properties better protected from flooding and coastal erosion
Increased users of facilities / amenities
Improved perception of facility/infrastructure project
Increased use of cycleways or paths
Increase in Biodiversity
Increased affordability of events/entry
Improved perception of safety
Reduction in neighbourhood crime
Improved engagement numbers
Improved perception of events
Increased number of web searches for a place
Volunteering numbers as a result of support
Number of community-led arts, cultural, heritage and creative programmes as a result of support
Increased take up of energy efficiency measures
Increased number of projects arising from funded feasibility studies
Number of premises with improved digital connectivity

2.4 INTERVENTIONS COMMUNITIES AND PLACE INVESTMENT PRIORITY

W1: Funding for improvements to town centres and high streets, including better accessibility for disabled people, including capital spend and running costs.

W2: Funding for new, or improvements to existing, community and neighbourhood infrastructure projects including those that increase communities' resilience to natural hazards, such as flooding, and investment in locally owned renewable energy generation and waste management to improve the transition to low carbon living This could cover capital spend and running costs.

W3: Creation of and improvements to local green spaces, community gardens, watercourses and embankments, along with incorporating natural features and biodiversity improvements into wider public space.

W4: Enhanced support for existing cultural, historic and heritage institutions that make up the local cultural and heritage offer, including improvements to access to sites to counter the effects of isolation, particularly for older people and disabled people.

W5: Design and management of the built and landscaped environment to 'design out crime'

W6: Support for local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities

W7: Support for active travel enhancement and other small-scale green transport infrastructure projects, having regard to the Wales Transport Strategy

W8: Funding for the development and promotion of wider campaigns and year-round experiences which encourage people to visit and explore the local area.

W9: Funding for impactful volunteering and/or social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places

W10: Funding for local sports facilities, tournaments, teams and leagues; to bring people together

W11: Investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups

W12: Investment in community engagement schemes to support community involvement in decision making in local regeneration.

W13: Community measures to reduce the cost of living, including through measures to improve energy efficiency, and combat fuel poverty and climate change.

W14: Funding to support relevant feasibility studies

W15: Investment and support for digital infrastructure for local community facilities.

2.5 POTENTIAL PROJECTS WHICH FALL UNDER THE COMMUNITIES AND PLACE INVESTMENT PRIORITY

In response to some of the key challenges and opportunities within Carmarthenshire, the following project ideas have been identified which will provide the mechanism for local communities to access support via the SPF from the outset as well as providing ease of access for smaller, grass roots organisations. Others will be considered.

‘Sustainable Communities’ fund – funding to support community led projects and support for social enterprises designed to create more vibrant and sustainable communities. The project will fund a range of capital and revenue activities, including pilot activity, that support the wellbeing of local communities in a range of areas from access to services, sports and leisure facilities, local culture and heritage through to addressing fuel poverty and climate change.

‘Sustaining Town Centres’ Fund – funding package to support capital projects and interventions to respond to the on-going challenges faced by Town Centres. The fund will be available to support the delivery of key actions identified within our integrated regeneration masterplans for Carmarthen, Llanelli and Ammanford, providing support to shift towards more diverse town centres, creating digitally smart environments and embracing the greening of town centres and decarbonisation.

Ten Towns Rural Fund - Targeted rural programme that supports and further expands on the Ten towns programme. Dedicated officer support to assist the development and sustainability of the County’s rural market towns as thriving economic and social centres. The project will provide both capacity and financial support (both revenue and capital) to deliver the aspirations identified within the recovery and growth plans for our 10 rural market towns.

The projects will ensure countywide coverage.

We have significant experience in delivering grant schemes and have agreed processes and procedures in place. We shall liaise with key stakeholders in the design and development of the grants over the coming months.

3.0 SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS INVESTMENT PRIORITY

3.1 Local Challenges

The Main Challenges:

- **Low productivity and GVA**
- **Low wages – Too many jobs do not pay enough**
- **Underemployment – Too many people cannot access jobs which meet their needs**
- **Reliance on micro and small businesses, coupled with relatively high employment in the public sector**
- **Lower than average level of businesses starting up**
- **Businesses recovering following the pandemic.**

Business Start Ups⁹

Business birth rates in Carmarthenshire have seen a small decline in recent years when compared with regional and national averages.¹⁰ A stagnant start-up rate is a barrier to growth and suggests a lack of confidence and capacity within the economy. Evidence highlighted in recent work on the Innovation prospects for the county suggests that the potential entrepreneurial capacity of the county is amongst the highest in Wales. Therefore, whilst current businesses within the county need relevant support there is also a need to focus on creating an ecosystem which harnesses existing entrepreneurial flare and make Carmarthenshire an attractive place to start a business.¹¹

An opportunity exists in this regard to provide targeted and local level support to individuals looking to start a business. This support would serve to complement existing business support initiatives and look to create a wrap-around level of support that is easily accessible and delivered by individuals with invaluable knowledge of the local business landscape in Carmarthenshire.

Carmarthenshire has a strong base of social businesses and has the potential to stimulate more. Research illustrates that social businesses offer additional social impact and value in West Wales with missions that involve actively improving local communities, improving health and well-being, addressing social exclusion and supporting vulnerable people. Supporting Pre-start/ new start support and small grants for early-stage social enterprises is therefore a key priority, working with communities on the ground to formulate enterprising ideas that address economic and social issues within their area.

Resilience and Scaling Up

The county is characterised by micro and small sized enterprises which account for 97.2% of the total business demography across the county. Whilst they are the very foundation of the county's economic and cultural ecosystem and provide employment for 36,000 people¹², their

⁹ [Business births, deaths and active enterprises by variable, area and industry \(SIC 2007\) \(gov.wales\)](#)

¹⁰ [Business births by area and year \(gov.wales\)](#)

¹¹ Exploring the Innovation Prospects for Carmarthenshire (2022)

¹² [Turnover by size-band, area and year \(gov.wales\)](#)

combined annual turnover of £2,121 million is significantly less than the £3,609 million generated by the county's 430 (2.8%) medium and large sized enterprises.¹³

If we are to realise notable economic growth and increase productivity, there is a need to focus on supporting these businesses to upscale including social enterprises, co-operatives and employee-owned businesses as well as traditional SMEs. Through utilising the rich foundation that already exists we will increase local spend and harness the potential for more localised growth in community wealth and wellbeing, drawing together business, people and place. Social businesses are good employers who often provide work and training opportunities to people considered furthest from the workplace and they usually employ people within a very close proximity to the business's base. There are opportunities to further develop growth in this sector. These ambitions align with those indicated in Carmarthenshire's Economic Recovery and Delivery Plan.

An over-reliance on micro and small sized enterprises presents unique challenges for the county and requires business support mechanisms which are targeted, yet flexible and consider the unique set of challenges and barriers to scaling up those businesses face. These include;

- Talent recruitment and retention – Several sectors have faced recruitment and retention challenges following the pandemic. Difficulty accessing the right skills, in the right place, at the right time, stunts a business's ability to meet demand and, in some instances, diversify their service or offering.
- Access to finance and investment – The finance support landscape can be complicated for smaller businesses to navigate. Without a dedicated resource seeking out these opportunities many small businesses miss out on financial support available.
- Achieving economies of scale – It is more difficult for smaller businesses to achieve economies of scale since they lack the resources and capital to take advantage of the benefits presented, in many instances the risks far outweigh the benefits of exploring these options, simply because of their size.
- Taking advantage of procurement opportunities – Many small businesses report barriers in taking advantage of local procurement opportunities. Recent primary intelligence gathered indicates that many businesses find the process complicated, or they lack the skills and capacity to undertake the bidding process. Advancing progressive procurement in the county is a key objective for Carmarthenshire, with a focus on community wealth building.¹⁴
- Access to suitable premises – There is recognition that access to modern and appropriate premises offer businesses a competitive advantage, providing access to customers and infrastructure which will support the business to grow and develop.
- Access to and making better use of technology – Digital connectivity is an overarching priority for Carmarthenshire and is a key driver in achieving economic growth. Ensuring that businesses have access to ultra-fast and ultra-reliable digital connectivity is crucial, and whilst progress has been made in identifying coverage problems across what is predominantly a rural county, work continues to intervene and improve connectivity where the need exists. This will ensure that businesses are able to confidently operate and compete in a global economy whilst retaining their base in Carmarthenshire.

¹³ [Turnover by size-band, area and year \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/turnover-by-size-band-area-and-year)

¹⁴ Community wealth building in Carmarthenshire – advancing progressive procurement – The National Organisation for Local Economies

Two-tier Approach

Whilst the challenges above are not exclusive to businesses of any one size, sector or type we recognise that the approach to achieving growth needs to be focussed on the underlying strengths which already exist.

Productivity per head in Carmarthenshire as of 2020 was 17,299, a figure which falls significantly below the UK average of 28,894.¹⁵ Two fundamental approaches to driving up GVA and productivity which can be carried out simultaneously are;

Localism

The foundational economy is a crucial element of Carmarthenshire's economic identity and makes an incomparable contribution to social wellbeing. This is substantiated by the high numbers of businesses operating within sectors that are deemed foundational. These include, but are not limited to; Wholesale, Retail, Transport, Hotels, Food and Communication. The 3,130 businesses operating within these sectors alone turnover £2,441 million and employ over 20,000 people.¹⁶ Additional broader sectors include; Construction and Tourism, both key economic and employment drivers within the county. The importance, therefore, of the foundational economy to the county cannot be overlooked. The effects of the pandemic were acutely felt by businesses operating within these sectors and whilst recovery is progressing well, challenges remain.

The opportunities afforded through the localism approach will look to address some of the most pertinent challenges, ensuring that these businesses are supported to access the right skills at the right time, have access to increased capital investment, have access to better infrastructure and make better use of technology. This will safeguard them, fostering sustainable growth and increased resilience.

Competitiveness

Whilst increasing the level of productivity and competitiveness across the whole local economy is crucial, several sectors have been identified as being of competitive advantage. The majority fall outside the traditional foundational economy and offer the greatest potential for higher productivity, higher wages, higher levels of growth and higher employment potential. Harnessing the potential of these sectors is an integral part of addressing some of the most pertinent barriers to growth for the county, most notably;

- Low Wages - The most recent statistics for 2021 indicate that the average weekly wage in Carmarthenshire is £547.50, noticeably lower than the Welsh average (£562.80)¹⁷ and significantly lower than the UK average (£610.70)¹⁸.
- Employment Patterns - These lower average wages are directly related to where employment is concentrated in Carmarthenshire, with more people on average working in occupational areas which tend to offer lower pay and less secure employment. Driving growth within these businesses therefore will drive the natural churn within the labour market, allowing more businesses to offer more well-paid, sustainable and meaningful employment.

¹⁵ [Gross Value Added \(£ per head\) by area and year \(gov.wales\)](#)

¹⁶ [Enterprises by industry \(SIC2007\), size-band and area \(gov.wales\)](#)

¹⁷ [Average \(median\) gross weekly earnings by UK country - English region and year \(£\) \(gov.wales\)](#)

¹⁸ [Average \(median\) gross hourly earnings by Welsh local areas and year \(£\) \(gov.wales\)](#)

The sectors identified within this cohort are;

Agri-food (a part of both the foundational economy and competitive advantage cohort)

The Agri-food sector is strategically important for the county owing to our natural landscape, resources and steeped heritage and history in the sector. While agriculture, forestry and fishing represents one of the smaller employment sectors, the proportion working in the county is almost double the national average in Wales.¹⁹

An important driver for the rural economy it performs well, however there is recognition that support is required to innovate and capitalise on the opportunities presented by emerging technologies and new markets, whilst protecting the vast diversity of farm types the county is home to.

As detailed in 'Moving Rural Carmarthenshire Forward,' Brexit has been particularly challenging for the sector, causing uncertainty around trade and the future policy/funding structure. However, there are also considerations for the sector with regards to the implications of the Net Zero target for Agriculture and Land Use.²⁰

Advanced Manufacturing

The Manufacturing base within Carmarthenshire is strong, however the sector has faced some challenges in recent years, evidenced by the loss of some key large businesses within the county.

There is recognition that support should be provided to improve the resilience of businesses operating within this space. This extends to focussing on business improvement, developing the local supply chain to counteract the effects of supply issues and support to leverage funding to support diversification (especially in relation to new technology).

Creative Industries

The Creative Industries are an important and growing sector within the county. The recent development of 'Yr Egin' in Carmarthen serves to act as an anchor in this respect and is intended to draw investment and provide a co-working space for businesses operating within this space.

Whilst this is the case, there is recognition that the sector is characterised by above average levels of self-employment and freelancing therefore support needs to be developed and delivered with this in mind. There is a key opportunity here to support these small companies and individuals to leverage funding, access opportunities and develop their resilience following a period of significant challenging owing to the pandemic.

Green Economy

The Green economy is an important consideration especially around the positioning of current and new businesses to be able to respond to and capitalise on opportunities presented. An important element of this is ensuring that businesses can access knowledge, training and supply chain development opportunities.²¹ This is especially important for businesses operating within the Construction and Manufacturing sectors.

Health, Care and Life Science

¹⁹ Exploring the Innovation Prospects for Carmarthenshire

²⁰ [moving-rural-carms-forward-report-final.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)

²¹ Exploring the Innovation Prospects for Carmarthenshire

Health and wellbeing are areas that represent both challenge and opportunity for Carmarthenshire. We have an ageing population with increasingly complex needs resulting in increasing requirements for specialist treatment. Delivering these services in an area where 61% of the population live in rural areas requires the local delivery of healthcare in a more innovative way. In this regard, the opportunities to support service delivery and pre-empt condition exacerbation are numerous, therefore businesses need support to be able to capitalise on these opportunities, in turn delivering better services to our people and increasing growth.

Welsh Language

The Welsh language is an important consideration in terms of business support and at a county level much work has been done in recent years to support businesses to improve and take advantage of their Welsh offer. There is recognition that more can be done in this space, therefore where possible and applicable businesses should continue to be supported to develop their Welsh language presence and offer. This serves to meet the needs of the 43.9% of the local population that speak Welsh but also is an important consideration in the ability of businesses to play a key role in the cultural landscape of our county.

3.2 Local Opportunities

In addition to the local opportunities detailed alongside the challenges in the section above, there are many opportunities identified in the national, regional, and local strategies listed below, that will help address the challenges that Carmarthenshire faces.

South West Wales Regional Economic Delivery Plan (SWWREDP)

Mission 1: A UK leader in renewable energy and the net zero economy

Looking to 2030, we aim to make South West Wales a UK leader in renewable energy. That means taking advantage of our natural assets and our industrial and R&D capabilities to build an internationally-significant presence in future fuel technologies and to drive the decarbonation of our industrial base and the wide economy

Key Actions:

- Additional Capacity to drive forward the agenda
- Progressing the region's major renewable energy generation projects
- Attracting and driving forward industrial investment
- Decarbonising transport and the housing stock

Mission 2: Building a strong, resilient, and embedded business base.

“Business is at the centre of our strategy to 2030. It will be through the expansion of existing firms and the start-up and attraction of new ones that new employment will be generated and productivity growth secured. That means supporting sustainable business growth – both at the ‘leading edge’ of technology and innovation and across the economy”

Key Actions:

- Accelerated adoption and innovation support (linked with the recommendations of Wales 4.0 in relation to business, skills and innovation support)
- 'Progressive procurement' within a local business and supply chain development system

Mission 3: Growing and sustaining the South West Wales 'experience' offer

"South West Wales enjoys a superb environment and a unique 'quality of life' offer. This is a key asset for the region, and one which we must protect and enhance. We will make South West Wales known for the quality and breadth of its 'experience' offer', bringing together urban and rural environmental quality, 'quality of life' and culture. This will support a high-value visitor economy – but it will also be locally owned and a central part of our investment proposition".

Key Actions:

- Targeted and coordinated capital investment, including in town and city centres
- Balancing of initiatives at a regional, local and community-driven scale

A Framework for Regional Investment in Wales (FRIW)

- **Priority 1: More Productive and Competitive Businesses**

"We want to drive recovery and prosperity by supporting entrepreneurs, start-ups and businesses to create and retain sustainable jobs that reflect the principles of Fair Work Wales. We will help businesses to take advantage of opportunities to grow and strengthen the productivity and competitiveness of businesses and social enterprises of all sizes, particularly micro to medium sized businesses. This includes supporting businesses in their efforts to create or improve their share of the export market"

- **Priority 2: Reducing the Factors that lead to Economic Inequality**

"We want to maximise the number of people able to participate in good quality, sustainable work, for which they receive fair pay, ensuring this is shared fairly across geographies and demographics, particularly amongst under-represented groups. Evidence³⁹ shows that inequality has a negative impact on economic growth and social outcomes. In the short term we will focus our efforts on supporting those who have been most adversely affected by the economic impact of the Covid pandemic, notably young people, those in low paid and insecure employment, women, black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups, and disabled people"

- **Priority 3: Supporting the Transition to a Zero-Carbon Economy**

"The climate crisis is the global challenge of our age. The risks are real for every citizen and business but are greatest for those who are already at a socio-economic disadvantage. The transition to a zero-carbon economy will bring opportunities for clean, energy efficient

economic development, quality jobs and global market advantages, as well as benefits to our environment, our health, our natural capital, and our ecosystem services”

- **Priority 4: Healthier Fairer, more Sustainable Communities**

“A workforce that is healthy and happy, and well-connected communities that are strong and resilient, are economic assets which benefit everyone. The link between well-being and economy has never been clearer. We want to help ensure that communities of place and of people have the resilience and structures they need, so that the people living here can live long, happy lives and fulfil their potential to contribute productively to our economy and society”

Carmarthenshire Economic Recovery and Delivery Plan (CERDP)

- **Theme 1 - Business**

“Safeguarding our existing businesses, supporting new start-ups and growing businesses in our foundational and growth sectors to become more productive and competitive”

- **Theme 2 – People**

“Protecting jobs, responding to significant expected unemployment, helping people gain the skills needed for the jobs that will exist, and creating new and better-skilled employment”

- **Theme 3 – Place**

“Ensuring a fair distribution of opportunities through investing in the infrastructure and adaptation of our strategic growth areas, town centres, the rural economy and regenerating our most deprived communities”

Four cross-cutting priority ambitions:

- Ultra-reliable digital connectivity, digital culture and skills – improving connectivity, tackling the associated challenges to deployment and intervening to make improvements in digital connectivity both now and for the future.
- Skills - supporting people and businesses to retrain, re-skill, and up-skill through blended traditional, online and work-based learning.
- Green economy – adding economic value through keeping resources in use and where waste is avoided, invest in low carbon and climate-resilient infrastructure, renewable energy and sustainable homes.
- Fair and equal economy and support for the Welsh language and culture – supporting peoples culture and well-being with local, fair, decent and secure employment

Exploring the Innovation Prospects for Carmarthenshire (EIPC)

The purpose of this study was to review the current position of Carmarthenshire and to inform CCC's local innovation strategy in the coming years. The following 4 opportunities conclude the report and have been derived from consultations with stakeholders and documentary analysis:

- Opportunity 1 - Digital: Enhancing Digital connectivity and exploiting Digital opportunities across Carmarthenshire
- Opportunity 2 - Health: Development of a dispersed living laboratory
- Opportunity 3 - Foundational Economy: Sustainable food procurement
- Opportunity 4 - Circular Economy: Leveraging a CE approach for the Net Zero Agenda

3.4 OUTCOMES THE INVESTMENT PLAN WILL DELIVER UNDER THE SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS INVESTMENT PRIORITY

Jobs created

Jobs safeguarded

Increased footfall

Increased visitor numbers

Reduced vacancy rates

Greenhouse gas reductions

Number of new businesses created

Improved perception of markets

Increased business sustainability

Increased number of businesses supported

Increased amount of investment

Improved perception of attractions

Number of businesses introducing new products to the firm

Number of organisations engaged in new knowledge transfer activity

Number of premises with improved digital connectivity

Number of businesses adopting new to the firm technologies or processes

Number of new to market products

Number of R&D active businesses

Increased number of innovation active SMEs

Number of businesses adopting new or improved products or services

Increased number of innovation plans developed

Number of early stage firms which increase their revenue following support

Number of businesses engaged in new markets

Number of businesses engaged in new markets

Number of businesses increasing their export capability

Increased amount of low or zero carbon energy infrastructure installed

Number of businesses with improved productivity

Increased number of projects arising from funded feasibility studies

Increased number of properties better protected from flooding and coastal erosion

3.5 INTERVENTIONS THE REGION WILL USE WHICH MEET THE SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS INVESTMENT PRIORITY

W16: Investment in open markets and improvements to town centre retail and service sector infrastructure, with wrap around support for small businesses.

W17: Funding for the development and promotion (both trade and consumer) of the visitor economy, such as local attractions, trails, tours and tourism products more generally

W18: Supporting Made Smarter Adoption: Providing tailored expert advice, matched grants and leadership training to enable manufacturing SMEs to adopt industrial digital technology solutions including artificial intelligence; robotics and autonomous systems; additive manufacturing; industrial internet of things; virtual reality; data analytics. The support is proven to leverage high levels of private investment into technologies that drive growth, productivity, efficiency and resilience in manufacturing.

W19: Increasing investment in research and development at the local level. Investment to support the diffusion of innovation knowledge and activities, in both economically important and emerging areas. Support the commercialisation of ideas, encouraging collaboration and accelerating the path to market so that more ideas translate into industrial and commercial practices. Investment in doctoral training centres

W20: Research and development grants supporting the development of innovative products and services. Grants to increase the research capacity and level of collaboration between firms to share best practice

W21: Funding for the development and support of appropriate innovation infrastructure at the local level.

W22: Investing in enterprise infrastructure and employment/innovation site development projects. This can help to unlock site development projects which will support growth in places.

W23: Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems, and supporting businesses at all stages of their development to start, sustain, grow and innovate, including through local networks.

W24: Funding for new and improvements to existing training hubs, business support offers, 'incubators' and 'accelerators' for local enterprise (including social enterprise) which can support entrepreneurs and start-ups through the early stages of development and growth by offering a combination of services including account management, advice, resources, training, coaching, mentorship and access to workspace.

W25: Grants to help places bid for and host international business events and conferences that support wider local growth sectors

W26: Support for growing the local social economy, including community businesses, cooperatives and social enterprises.

W27: Funding to develop angel investor networks nationwide.

W28: Export Grants to support businesses to grow their overseas trading, supporting local employment and investment.

W29: Supporting decarbonisation and improving the natural environment whilst growing the local economy. Taking a whole systems approach to invest in infrastructure to deliver effective decarbonisation across energy, buildings and transport and beyond, in line with our legally binding climate target. Maximising existing or emerging local strengths in low carbon technologies, goods and services to take advantage of the growing global opportunity.

W30: Business support measures to drive employment growth, particularly in areas of higher unemployment.

W31: Funding to support relevant feasibility studies

W32: Funding to support progression of small businesses into productive medium sized firms

W33: Investment in resilience infrastructure and nature-based solutions that protect local businesses and community areas from natural hazards including flooding and coastal erosion.

3.6 POTENTIAL PROJECTS WHICH FALL UNDER THE SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS INVESTMENT PRIORITY

Building on our experience of delivering support to local businesses we would consider the following projects to be a priority for the County as identified within our key strategic plans which have been consulted widely. Other will be considered.

Business Start-up and Growth Fund - targeted capital/revenue fund to support the development and growth of local businesses and to drive local employment.

Tourism, culture and heritage fund - support to increase the local economic impact of the visitor sector by improving the visitor experience within towns and key tourist “hotspots” across Carmarthenshire.

Property Development Funds - package of assistance to support developers and owner occupiers to invest in construction, expansion and refurbishments of property to meet the infrastructure needs of local businesses and to address the current viability gap which exists across the region.

Each of the business funds will be delivered Countywide. The exact criteria for the respective funds would be developed in consultation with the Carmarthenshire Local Regeneration Partnership

4.0 PEOPLE AND SKILLS INVESTMENT PRIORITY AND MULTIPLY PROGRAMME

4.1 Local Challenges

Main challenges:

- **Too many people with no qualifications**
- **High economic inactivity rate**
- **Higher than average level of those that are most likely to be furthest away from the labour market**
- **Skills delivery which is rigid and doesn't always meet the needs of local employers**
- **Careers, advice and guidance that doesn't always take into account the needs of local employers**

Economic Inactivity

Carmarthenshire has the highest economic inactivity rate of the 22 local authorities in Wales. At 28.3, the rate is significantly above national averages for Wales (23.6) and the UK (21.8)²². A number of factors have likely contributed to this higher rate, including;

- The county is home to an above average level of people with disabilities and long-term limiting health conditions which pushes them further away from the labour market.
- The county is home to an above average level of people who are retired.
- The county is home to an above average level of students.

²² Economic inactivity rates (including students) by Welsh local area and year (Dec. 2021)

This is a significant barrier to growth for Carmarthenshire, as the economically inactive represent a significant source of labour supply which is a crucial element of a well-functioning labour market. This is also concerning given that being inactive for a long period of time can negatively impact a person's wellbeing, health and life-satisfaction. This is therefore a fundamental issue to address in the ambition to improving the life-chances of individuals and grow the local economy.

There are opportunities to provide intensive, wrap-around, one-to-one support to move these individuals closer to the labour market which would provide tailored mechanisms to make the movement from inactivity to employment as simple a transition as possible. This should be in the format of a cohesive system where careers guidance is provided in conjunction with the identification of skills needs which are directly related to the ambitions of that person and the needs of the local economy. This extends to highlighting and promoting the importance of work as well as exploring development in the context of basic skills, work-ready skills and vocational training to reduce the chances of drop-off and discouragement.

There is a need to focus these interventions (albeit not exclusively) on those that face unique challenges to entering the labour market. These groups include;

- Older People,
- Women,
- Disabled people and those with long-term limiting health conditions,
- People from an ethnic minority,
- Young people not in education, employment or training,
- Individuals with multiple complex needs.

Qualification Levels

A barrier to employment for many is a lack of qualifications or skills. This applies to those that have no qualifications at all and those that wish to re-skill or up-skill to better themselves and seek higher level or alternative employment. This is a pertinent issue for Carmarthenshire, as the county exhibits a higher than average number of people with no qualifications and a lower proportion than average of people with higher level qualifications.²³

There is an opportunity to support those with no qualifications to gain basic skills qualifications and those up to level 2, which could act as a gateway to gaining employment but also higher-level qualifications. These basic skills include (but are not limited to); English, Maths and ESOL. This would serve to address the gaps in current DWP and Welsh Government provision and allow for the development of local-level interventions which meet local needs.

Furthermore, there is a specific need to develop digital skills and increase levels of digital inclusion. The world of work is changing and reliance on digital technologies within the workplace is increasing at rapid rates. Providing individuals with relevant and transferrable digital skills will therefore not only improve their employability but also make them more confident with regards to accessing wider services online.

Local Skills Needs – Supply and Demand

To create a growing and resilient local labour market, it is imperative to provide individuals with the skills required by local employers. This is in respect of the skills required now and

²³ ONS Annual Population Survey (Dec. 2021)

those that will be required in the future. A forward-looking approach will ensure that local people are able to benefit from future opportunities which present themselves. This is also a crucial step in reducing what is termed as 'brain drain' whereby highly qualified individuals leave the area to take up higher paid employment elsewhere.

Much work has been undertaken within this space by the Regional Learning and Skills Partnership, with employers from Carmarthenshire's key strategic sectors reporting a number of in-demand and desired skills.²⁴ These are indicated below;

Manufacturing & Engineering – Problem solving skills, leadership and management skills, computer literacy skills, skills in new technology.

Construction – Work-readiness skills, communication skills, problem solving skills and manual dexterity.

Agri-food – Comprehension skills, communication skills, leadership and management skills and food manufacturing skills.

Financial, Professional and Digital – Advanced/specialist IT skills, Coding/web development skills, skills in new technology and basic IT skills.

Health and Social Care – Health care skills, communication skills, basic IT skills and skills in new technology.

Public Services – Advanced and basic IT skills, problem solving, oral Welsh language skills, communication skills, leadership and management skills and HGV/LGV driving skills.

Tourism, Leisure and Retail – Marketing skills, chef/kitchen skills, advanced and basic IT skills and coding/web development skills.

Creative Industries – Advanced and basic IT skills, skills in new technology, entrepreneurial skills, coding/web development, creative content development skills and marketing skills.

Taking these skills needs into account, there are clearly opportunities to focus skills delivery in some key areas, with this evidence further substantiating the need to develop the digital and general work readiness skills of individuals. These could be addressed through basic skills delivery up to level 2 with more specialist skills delivered via other methods such as work-based learning or through vocational delivery.

Working in conjunction with local providers, support would serve to fund gaps in local skills provision and explore alternative delivery methods. This could be in the format of bite-sized, module-based delivery of both an accredited and non-accredited nature. This creates a skills system which is innovative and flexible in its approach and aligns with the needs of employers and recommendations made by the Regional Learning and Skills Partnership.

As a result of Carmarthenshire's older population there is also an opportunity to provide tailored support to those in employment to access skills provision. This would serve to reduce the loss of skilled individuals from the labour market and support retention in some sectors

²⁴ RLSP – An analysis of the Impacts of Covid on South West Wales (2021)

where an ageing workforce is a concern. These issues are more acute (although not exclusive) in the Construction and Manufacturing and Engineering sectors.²⁵

Green Developments

Carmarthenshire has a number of ambitions aligned to both the communities and place and business support investment themes with regard to Green agenda. It is crucial therefore that skills developments within these areas are considered. This is especially pertinent for the Construction and Engineering and Manufacturing sectors where future skills needs relate to specialist engineering skills, retrofit skills, smart manufacturing skills and renewable energy skills.

Welsh Language

When taking into account skills provision in a Carmarthenshire context, consideration must be given to the development of provision which allows individuals to undertake learning through the language of their choice. With 43.9% of the population able to speak Welsh there is a clear argument that the demand would exist.

This also serves to meet the needs of local employers whereby Welsh language skills have been highlighted as important by the Creative Industries, Health and Social Care and Retail, Tourism and Leisure sectors.

Careers Advice and Guidance

Evidence indicates that several key sectors have and continue to experience recruitment challenges. A number of issues culminate in creating these recruitment challenges, with a lack of skills and the perception of sectors being primary contributory factors.²⁶

Careers, advice and guidance plays a key role in dispelling myths and improving the perceptions of sectors. Sectors that report being particularly affected by this include; Health and Social Care, Tourism, Leisure and Retail, Construction and Agri-food. These are all sectors of strategic importance for Carmarthenshire, it is therefore crucial that people are aware of the opportunities presented by these industries. This is an important step in the creation of a pipeline of talent armed with the desired skills to feed into the labour market, which would be to the benefit of local businesses and in turn our local economy.

To this end, there is an opportunity to provide careers, advice and guidance in a more cohesive way at a local level, taking into account the skills needs of local employers. Working in conjunction with organisations already delivering such services will serve to reduce duplication and complement what is already offered.

The delivery of careers, advice and guidance should also consider the gender profiles of many sectors and attempt to dispel the typical gender stereotypes associated with some sectors. This would address the significant gender disparity evident across many areas of the economy which relates to employment, the gender pay gap and opportunities to prosper more generally.

²⁵ RLSP – Regional Employment and Skills Plan (2019)

²⁶ RLSP – Regional Employment and Skills Plan (2019)

Enrichment and Volunteering Opportunities

There is an argument to suggest that the provision of enrichment and volunteering opportunities may provide similar benefits as those provided by work experience opportunities. Work experience has traditionally been considered something that younger people do as part of their statutory education, however there are benefits to be realised for all age groups and people from all backgrounds. Taster sessions in relevant industries may serve to reduce drop-off and highlight the wider benefits to be realised by being in work rather than the traditional focus of financial reward. The same can be said for volunteering placements within the county's many third sector and smaller community groups. Taking part in such schemes would provide a stepped approach to entering the labour market, removing some of the pressure that those furthest away may feel when making the transition straight into paid employment.

There are opportunities to explore the viability of such an approach in Carmarthenshire, looking at lessons learned from similar initiatives.

4.2 LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to the local opportunities detailed alongside the challenges in the section above, there are many opportunities identified in the national, regional, and local strategies listed below, that will help address the challenges that Carmarthenshire faces.

South West Wales Regional Economic Delivery Plan (SWWREDP)

Mission 1: A UK leader in renewable energy and the net zero economy

Looking to 2030, we aim to make South West Wales a UK leader in renewable energy. That means taking advantage of our natural assets and our industrial and R&D capabilities to build an internationally-significant presence in future fuel technologies and to drive the decarbonation of our industrial base and the wide economy

Key Actions:

- Additional Capacity to drive forward the agenda
- Progressing the region's major renewable energy generation projects
- Attracting and driving forward industrial investment
- Decarbonising transport and the housing stock

Mission 2: Building a strong, resilient, and embedded business base.

"Business is at the centre of our strategy to 2030. It will be through the expansion of existing firms and the start-up and attraction of new ones that new employment will be generated and productivity growth secured. That means supporting sustainable business growth – both at the 'leading edge' of technology and innovation and across the economy"

Key Actions:

- Accelerated adoption and innovation support (linked with the recommendations of Wales 4.0 in relation to business, skills and innovation support)

- ‘Progressive procurement’ within a local business and supply chain development system

Mission 3: Growing and sustaining the South West Wales ‘experience’ offer

“South West Wales enjoys a superb environment and a unique ‘quality of life’ offer. This is a key asset for the region, and one which we must protect and enhance. We will make South West Wales known for the quality and breadth of its ‘experience’ offer’, bringing together urban and rural environmental quality, ‘quality of life’ and culture. This will support a high-value visitor economy – but it will also be locally owned and a central part of our investment proposition”.

Key Actions:

- Targeted and coordinated capital investment, including in town and city centres
- Balancing of initiatives at a regional, local and community-driven scale

A Framework for Regional Investment in Wales (FRIW)

- **Priority 1: More Productive and Competitive Businesses**

“We want to drive recovery and prosperity by supporting entrepreneurs, start-ups and businesses to create and retain sustainable jobs that reflect the principles of Fair Work Wales. We will help businesses to take advantage of opportunities to grow and strengthen the productivity and competitiveness of businesses and social enterprises of all sizes, particularly micro to medium sized businesses. This includes supporting businesses in their efforts to create or improve their share of the export market”

- **Priority 2: Reducing the Factors that lead to Economic Inequality**

“We want to maximise the number of people able to participate in good quality, sustainable work, for which they receive fair pay, ensuring this is shared fairly across geographies and demographics, particularly amongst under-represented groups. Evidence shows that inequality has a negative impact on economic growth and social outcomes. In the short term we will focus our efforts on supporting those who have been most adversely affected by the economic impact of the Covid pandemic, notably young people, those in low paid and insecure employment, women, black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups, and disabled people”

- **Priority 3: Supporting the Transition to a Zero-Carbon Economy**

“The climate crisis is the global challenge of our age. The risks are real for every citizen and business but are greatest for those who are already at a socio-economic disadvantage. The transition to a zero-carbon economy will bring opportunities for clean, energy efficient economic development, quality jobs and global market advantages, as well as benefits to our environment, our health, our natural capital, and our ecosystem services”

- **Priority 4: Healthier Fairer, more Sustainable Communities**

“A workforce that is healthy and happy, and well-connected communities that are strong and resilient, are economic assets which benefit everyone. The link between well-being and economy has never been clearer. We want to help ensure that communities of place and of people have the resilience and structures they need, so that the people living here can live long, happy lives and fulfil their potential to contribute productively to our economy and society”

Carmarthenshire Economic Recovery and Delivery Plan (CERDP)

- **Theme 1 - Business**

“Safeguarding our existing businesses, supporting new start-ups and growing businesses in our foundational and growth sectors to become more productive and competitive”

- **Theme 2 – People**

“Protecting jobs, responding to significant expected unemployment, helping people gain the skills needed for the jobs that will exist, and creating new and better-skilled employment”

- **Theme 3 – Place**

“Ensuring a fair distribution of opportunities through investing in the infrastructure and adaptation of our strategic growth areas, town centres, the rural economy and regenerating our most deprived communities”

Four cross-cutting priority ambitions:

- Ultra-reliable digital connectivity, digital culture and skills – improving connectivity, tackling the associated challenges to deployment and intervening to make improvements in digital connectivity both now and for the future.
- Skills - supporting people and businesses to retrain, re-skill, and up-skill through blended traditional, online and work-based learning.
- Green economy – adding economic value through keeping resources in use and where waste is avoided, invest in low carbon and climate-resilient infrastructure, renewable energy and sustainable homes.
- Fair and equal economy and support for the Welsh language and culture – supporting peoples culture and well-being with local, fair, decent and secure employment

Exploring the Innovation Prospects for Carmarthenshire (EIPC)

The purpose of this study was to review the current position of Carmarthenshire and to inform CCC’s local innovation strategy in the coming years. The following 4 opportunities conclude

the report and have been derived from consultations with stakeholders and documentary analysis:

- Opportunity 1 - Digital: Enhancing Digital connectivity and exploiting Digital opportunities across Carmarthenshire
- Opportunity 2 - Health: Development of a dispersed living laboratory
- Opportunity 3 - Foundational Economy: Sustainable food procurement
- Opportunity 4 - Circular Economy: Leveraging a CE approach for the Net Zero Agenda

4.3 OUTCOMES THE INVESTMENT PLAN WILL DELIVER UNDER THE PEOPLE AND SKILLS INVESTMENT PRIORITY

Number of economically inactive individuals in receipt of benefits they are entitled to following support

Increased active or sustained participants of UKSPF beneficiaries in community groups [and/or] increased employability through development of interpersonal skills

Increased proportion of participants with basic skills (English, maths, digital and ESOL)

Number of people in supported employment [and] number of people engaging with mainstream healthcare services

Number of people sustaining engagement with keyworker support and additional Services

Number of people engaged in job-searching following support

Number of people in employment, including self-employment, following support

Number of people sustaining employment for 6 months

Increased employment, skills and/or UKSPF objectives incorporated into local area corporate governance

Number of people in education/training

Increased number of people with basic skills (English, maths, digital and ESOL)

Fewer people facing structural barriers into employment and into skills provision

Increased number of people familiarised with employers' expectations, including, standards of behaviour in the workplace

Fewer people facing structural barriers into employment and into skills provision

Number of people gaining a qualification or completing a course following support

Number of people gaining qualifications, licences, and skills

Number of economically active individuals engaged in mainstream skills education, and training.

Number of people engaged in life skills support following interventions

Number of people with proficiency in pre-employment and interpersonal skills (relationship, organisational and anger-management, interviewing, CV and job application writing)

Multiply only - Increased number of adults achieving maths qualifications up to, and including, Level 2.

Multiply only - Increased number of adults participating in maths qualifications and courses up to, and including, Level 2

4.4 UK SPF INTERVENTIONS THAT WILL BE USED WHICH MEET THE PEOPLE AND SKILLS INVESTMENT PRIORITY

W34: Employment support for economically inactive people: Intensive and wrap around one-to-one support to move people closer to mainstream provision and to gain and retain employment, including wraparound support to people undertaking apprenticeships, supplemented by additional and/or specialist life and basic skills (digital, English, maths* and ESOL) support where there are local provision gaps. Funding for vocational training for economically inactive people, where the provision is additional to that funded via mainstream provision. * via Multiply

W35: Courses including basic skills (digital, English, maths (via Multiply) and ESOL), and life skills and career skills** provision for people who are not economically inactive and who are unable to access other training or wrap around support detailed above. Supplemented by financial support for learners to enrol onto courses and complete qualifications. *where not being met through Department for Work and Pensions or Welsh Government provision.

W36: Activities such as enrichment and volunteering to improve opportunities and promote wellbeing.

W37: Interventions to increase levels of digital inclusion, with a focus on essential digital skills, communicating the benefits of getting (safely) online, and in community support to provide users with the confidence and trust to stay online.

W38: Tailored support to help people in employment, who are not supported by mainstream provision to address barriers to accessing education and training courses. This includes supporting the retention of groups who are likely to leave the labour market early.

W39: Support for local areas to fund local skills needs. This includes technical and vocational qualifications and courses up to level 2 and training for vocational licences relevant to local area needs and high-value qualifications where there is a need for additional skills capacity that cannot be met through mainstream funding.

W40: Green skills courses targeted around ensuring we have the skilled workforce to achieve the government's net zero and wider environmental ambitions.

W41: Retraining and upskilling support for those in high carbon sectors, with a particular focus on transitioning to green, and Industry 4.0 and 5.0 jobs.

W42: Funding to support local digital skills.

W43: Funding to support engagement and softer skills development for young people, with regard to the work of Careers Wales/Working Wales.

Multiply interventions

W44: Courses designed to increase confidence with numbers for those needing the first steps towards formal qualifications.

W45: Courses for parents wanting to increase their numeracy skills in order to help their children and help with their own progression.

W46: Courses aimed at prisoners, those recently released from prison or on temporary licence

W47: Courses aimed at people who can't apply for certain jobs because of lack of numeracy skills and/or to encourage people to upskill in order to access a certain job/career.

W48: Additional relevant maths modules embedded into other vocational courses.

W49: Innovative programmes delivered together with employers – including courses designed to cover specific numeracy skills required in the workplace.

W50: New intensive and flexible courses targeted at people without Level 2 maths in Wales, leading to an equivalent qualification (for more information on equivalent qualifications, please see [Qualifications can cross boundaries \(sqa.org.uk\)](http://Qualifications can cross boundaries (sqa.org.uk)))

W51: Courses designed to help people use numeracy to manage their money.

W52: Courses aimed at those 19 or over that are leaving, or have just left, the care system

W53: Activities, courses or provision developed in partnership with community organisations and other partners aimed at engaging the hardest to reach learners – for example, those not in the labour market or other groups identified locally as in need.

4.5 POTENTIAL PROJECTS WHICH FALL UNDER THE PEOPLE AND SKILLS INVESTMENT PRIORITY

Carmarthenshire has the highest economic inactivity rate of the 22 local authorities in Wales. At 28.3, the rate is significantly above national averages for Wales (23.6) and the UK (21.8). A key priority therefore is to address this through the following initiatives:

Supporting people into work - A bespoke programme of tailored support to reduce economic inactivity and to support those furthest from the labour market back into work. The project will offer a menu of training opportunities including access to basic skills, employability support, mentoring and work placements to improve employment outcomes for specific cohorts who face labour market barriers including 50+.

Youth engagement provision – pre and post 16 provision to support young people to attain positive outcomes. This would involve the development of a programme of activities to engage children and young people. The project would work with those at risk of NEET or already NEET children and young people using preventative youth support approaches to engage with people who often have a range of complex needs. The project will include a series of bespoke youth support packages designed to support the individual towards better outcomes. Within

the offer will be a number of posts including these linked to digital and media; emotional health and wellbeing; and youth work.

Projects of this nature have been successfully delivered previously. These initiatives will build on lessons learned from previous projects of this nature that have been successfully run across the County.

Others will also be considered.