



Growing Mid Wales December Newsletter

A YEAR IN FOCUS

As 2022 draws to a close, it's a chance for us to reflect on developments, celebrate achievements made and look towards the horizon for what's in store for 2023. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you, for signing up to receive this newsletter each month and for your continued support in helping us achieve what we set out to do - acknowledging the need for developing a consensus on priorities for our region, and for sharing our vision to progress jobs, growth and the local economy.

We wish your festive holidays to be full of warmth and cheer while you reconnect with loved ones and unwind from the daily grind. We look forward to keeping in contact with you in the new year and continue working together to achieve more and better results for our region.

This newsletter is now our regular way to communicate with our stakeholders and we will always be looking at ways to improve the way we deliver our news. So, if you have any feedback, comments or relevant content to feature here, we'd love to hear from you.

Helping to grow opportunity in Mid Wales,

The Growing Mid Wales team



Read on for:

- Fact of the Month
- The Year In Review 2022
- Meet the Teams
- What's on the horizon for 2023

Fact of the Month: Did you know that there is a Christmas hillfort in Ceredigion?



1 - Castell Nadolig, Ceredigion

In coastal Ceredigion overlooking Cardigan Bay is an Iron Age hillfort with a curious name; it appears to be the only hillfort in Wales which bears the name 'Christmas'.

The place-name scholar Iwan Wmffre in 2004 recorded the earliest reference to 'Kastell Yn Dolig' in a 1571/2 manuscript. By 1594 on the Gogerddan Estate Records for Penbryn the site appears as 'Castell Nadolig', the name still used more than four centuries later. Only one other location seems to bear the same name, an isolated farm near Llandysul, Ceredigion.

A conclusion made by Dr Toby Driver, Senior Investigator, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales is that Castell Nadolig must have been a very special place in the last centuries before the Roman conquest of Britain, possibly a focus for religious ceremonies and burial. Its coastal position, like the famous Llyn Cerrig Bach sacred lake on western Anglesey, may have facilitated visits by overseas travellers from the Atlantic coasts of Ireland, Cornwall, Brittany and Spain, continuing a tradition of exploratory Greek voyages for trade and contact around Welsh and British shores from as far back as 300 BC.

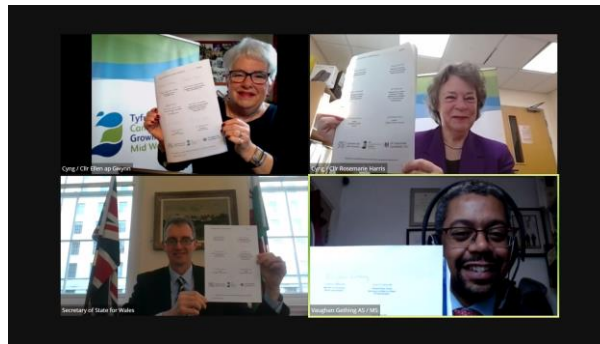
More information about Castell Nadolig can be found on [the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales website](#).

Image: *The image AP_2019_1001 Castell Nadolig is Crown copyright and is reproduced with the permission of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW), under delegated authority from The Keeper of Public Records. © Crown copyright: RCAHMW*

2022: Key Developments and Achievements

January 2022 saw the signing of the [Final Deal Agreement for the Mid Wales Growth Deal](#) by the Welsh Government, UK Government and the region's local authorities, Ceredigion County Council and Powys County Council. [It](#) marked the commitment of all partners to deliver the Mid Wales Growth Deal.

It marked the commitment of all partners to deliver the Mid Wales Growth Deal, a ground-breaking partnership bringing a combined investment of £110m from UK and Welsh Government, which is expected to lever in significant additional investment from other public and private sources maximising the impact in the Mid Wales region.



2 - Signing the Final Deal Agreement were Ellen ap Gwynn, Rosemarie Harris, previous joint Chairs of the Growing Mid Wales Board; David TC Davies, Secretary of State for Wales, UK Government, and Vaughan Gething, Welsh Government Economy Minister.

Commitment to Joint Working Reaffirmed



3 - Councillor James Gibson-Watt, Leader of Powys County Council and Councillor Bryan Davies, Leader of Ceredigion County Council.

- The [Royal Welsh Show](#) was the first opportunity for joint chairs of the Growing Mid Wales Board - Councillor James Gibson-Watt, Leader of Powys County Council and Councillor Bryan Davies, Leader of Ceredigion County Council - to meet. This was an opportunity to confirm their commitment to work together to deliver the Mid Wales Growth Deal.
- A Growing Mid Wales presentation was made to delegates, celebrating successes already achieved in the region and the opportunities for future collaboration.

Strategic Leads

Carwyn Jones-Evans and Nicola Williams confirmed their roles as Joint Portfolio Strategic Lead Officers for Growing Mid Wales.



Team work

Growing Mid Wales has three regional teams in place to ensure the development and delivery of the Vision for Growing Mid Wales, including the Mid Wales Growth Deal.

A profile of all GMW team members and their roles can be found later on in this newsletter.

While each team undertakes a specific function, they all work closely together to ensure alignment and integration of work across the region. Here we set out each team's key developments and achievements in 2022:

Mid Wales Portfolio Management Office (PoMO)

- The Portfolio Management Office were pleased to welcome new members to the team. Tom Yeo took up the role of Energy Lead in April to drive forward the energy and decarbonisation agenda for the region. Angharad Massow joined as Communications Officer in June and has been busy raising the profile of Growing Mid Wales. And in August, John Collingwood

commenced the role of Sites & Premises Programme Manager leading on the development of prioritised sites and infrastructure to meet business needs.



Priority Programmes

Digital Programme: A programme board has been established to oversee development and delivery of the Digital programme. The Growing Mid Wales Digital Programme aims to capitalise on the economic opportunities that can be unlocked by investing in digital infrastructure in order to address deficits in digital connectivity, drive the uptake of new technologies amongst the regions businesses and to improve the services that already exist. Look out for more news on the Digital Programme in our January newsletter!

Sites & Premises Programme: Building on earlier scoping work, and with John starting his role as Sites and Premises Programme Manager, the Portfolio Management Office are now looking to confirm a deliverable programme of investment and sustainable development that will help meet identified demand. A programme board has been established to oversee development and delivery of the programme.

Energy: Welsh Government commissioned the [Mid Wales Energy Strategy](#) as part of Wales wide energy planning work to support the pathway to net zero. The strategy document was co-developed by the Welsh Government Energy Service, Growing Mid Wales, and regional stakeholders across various face to face and virtual meetings, workshops and online surveys and was endorsed by the Mid Wales region in 2021. Following on from the development of the strategy document, the region has spent 2022 engaging and shaping an action plan to deliver upon the strategy document.

Growing Mid Wales held several stakeholder workshop sessions early in the year, focussed on key priority themes within the strategy document including domestic, transport, agricultural and commercial, and power and generation. The region engaged with 60 organisations across the private, public and third sectors with over 150 individuals supporting the identification of over 60 actions which were then prioritised and refined to a final set of 45 Mid Wales actions.

The Mid Wales Energy Strategy and Action Plan serves as a regionally important document, providing the vision, focus and actions required to overcome key challenges to decarbonise the region towards net zero. Regional energy planning forms part of wider national energy planning work such as the Future Energy Wales project and Net Zero Wales commitments and have been specifically developed to compliment and align with local climate emergency declarations, strategies and action plans - creating a direct link and shared ambitions in Wales from local to national.

Growing Mid Wales aims to gain approval and endorsement of the strategy action plan early 2023, focus will then shift to Welsh Government commissioned Local Area Energy Plans for Powys and Ceredigion which will delve into more localised energy system detail in Powys and Ceredigion communities identifying interventions and projects which compliments the energy strategy and further supports Mid Wales ambitions to decarbonise key sectors.

Mid Wales Growth Deal

Potential Growth Deal projects have submitted their Strategic Outline Business Cases for assessment and six projects have been given the mandate to progress to the development of Outline Business Cases. Have a look back at our [October newsletter](#) to find out a bit more about each project.



4 - Projects include Aberaeron Harbour, Elan Valley, Cynefin: The Green Heart of Wales, Food Manufacturing Innovation Centre, Green Futures Innovation Park and the National Spectrum Centre.

- A positive assurance review has been undertaken by Welsh Government giving reassurance to Growth Deal funders of Mid Wales' capacity and capability to successfully deliver the Growth Deal.
- Plans are underway for a series of stakeholder engagement workshops on the Growth Deal with Elected Members from both Ceredigion and Powys local authorities, representatives from Welsh and UK Government and the Growth Deal's Economic Advisory Group. The workshops will feature presentations from the Project Sponsors and give the opportunity to have a discussion on the proposals and provide feedback to help strengthen the business cases.

Communication activities

- Month by month we continually see an increase in our Twitter and LinkedIn followers. If you don't already follow us, take a look now, hit the follow button and share with your peers: <https://twitter.com/growingmidwales> www.linkedin.com/company/growing-mid-wales
- A monthly GMW newsletter has been established. So far, we've shone a spotlight on Mid Wales Transportation (TraCC), the Regional Skills Partnership, the Regional Engagement Team and Growth Deal project proposals. All the newsletters can be found on the News and Events page on our [website](#).



5 - 2022 Growing Mid Wales Newsletters

Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership (RSP)

New Regional Skills Partnership Chair



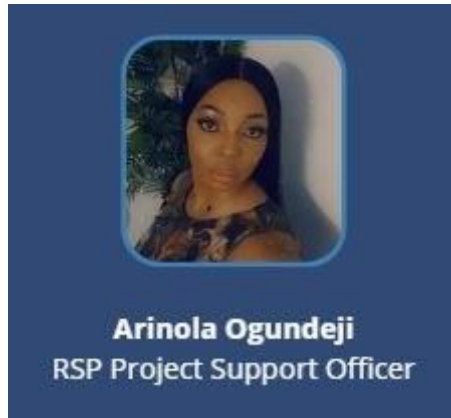
6 - Emma Thomas, Aber Instruments

In October at the annual Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership Board meeting, Emma Thomas of key regional company, ABER Instruments, was announced as the new Chair of the Board. The Chair of the Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership plays a key role in helping to drive the region's vision for learning and skills, representing the voice of the private sector in the region to influence and support regional decision-making and to champion the region at a national level.

Emma Thomas is currently the HR Manager at ABER Instruments, a Life Science Manufacturer, and has been with the company for the last seven and a half years. Emma said: "I am excited by the role of Chair for the RSP and hope that as a group we can help to make a difference by ensuring the correct skills provision is available to meet the needs and requirements of Mid Wales. Retaining our young people with the correct skills is essential to our economy."

[Click here to read the full article and more on Emma's background.](#)

- Arinola Ogundeji joined the RSP team as Project Support Officer, providing support to the RSP team and assisting in the development of the Employment and Skills Plan.



- A Mid Wales Employment and Skills Survey was undertaken in the Autumn. Key findings from the survey have fed into the Mid Wales Employment and Skills Plan and Action Plan, 2022-2025 that is currently being finalised.
- Young Persons Guarantee report: The Programme for Government (PfG) sets out an ambitious commitment to deliver the Young Persons Guarantee, giving everyone under 25 the offer of support into work, education, training, or self-employment. The guarantee was set to ensure no lost generation across Wales due to the predicted economic downturn and the huge rise in unemployment as a result of COVID-19 and Brexit. The RSP has developed a report looking at barriers to provision and progression as part of the desktop research report and Action Plan. A mapping exercise of current provision has been undertaken and shared with Working Wales. Further work will continue in this important policy area.

Mid Wales Regional Engagement Team (RET)

- Barbara Green joined the RET team as Project Support Officer, providing support to the RET Team and wider Growing Mid Wales colleagues, and to help a joined up approach with regional engagement activities.



ESIF-funded projects

The following are examples of ESIF-funded projects in the region that have completed in 2022. The Mid Wales RET and Growing Mid Wales have been working with these projects to help Mid Wales build a brighter future:

Future Foods : The [Future Foods](#) project was delivered by Aberystwyth University and BIC Innovation through the Nutri Wales Cluster. Supported by the Welsh Government, it received £2.25m funding through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The programme assisted commercial food and drink manufacturers to engage in collaborative R&D projects which in turn improved their competitiveness and supported their future growth and sustainability. In supporting the future growth of the food and drink industry in Wales, the programme delivered on the Welsh Government's ambitions for growth and rural development focusing on three pillars. **Global Needs** - climate change, global population and sustainable food production **Needs of the Individual** – optimisation of good health and wellbeing through products and satisfying consumer demands **Relevance to Wales** – Wellbeing of Future Generations Act



GEOM (Geographical Data and Earth Observation for Monitoring)

The Geographical Data and Earth Observation for Monitoring (GEOM) programme, led by Aberystwyth University, was a 3-year initiative receiving funding of £1.9m through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Its goal was to provide SMEs and organisations in Wales with support to exploit spatial, geographic and earth observation data intelligence using the expertise and capabilities of the GEOM team.

GEOM offered access to the state-of-the-art image processing and artificial intelligence to capture and interpret vital information for use by a range of sectors including agriculture, energy, security, environment, tourism, transport and infrastructure, helping companies to develop market-ready products and services.

Find out more about [GEOM](#)'s important work in these case studies:

- A low-cost data transfer system to facilitate sensors on livestock farms - Caerphilly Council, IBERS & Aberystwyth University
- Priority Habitat Mapping - National Trust
- Data Collection Viability Assessment - Wales Coastal Monitoring Centre
- Using Spectral Heterogeneity to predict Species Diversity and Historic Fertiliser Application - Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water



Canolfan Creuddyn Centre

[Creuddyn](#), a new business centre for Mid Wales was opened in Lampeter by the region's housing association, Barcud. The Centre provides an eco-friendly, state of the art community facility that accommodates social enterprises, supports jobs and helps to reduce social isolation in the area.

The GMW Partnership supported the project by prioritising it to receive funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Transforming Towns initiative programme, funded by Welsh Government. This partnership working brought in a total investment of £3.2m to the town of Lampeter and the local economy.

Sara Jones, Creuddyn Facilities Officer said: "We are very proud of Creuddyn. In its short life to date, the centre has already embedded itself in the town's daily life. The building provides homes for twenty-one micro businesses (surpassing business plan projections) and supports the need for top-quality business accommodation and hot desks in rural west Wales. The comprehensive IT infrastructure throughout Creuddyn offers conferences and remote meetings, which opens up endless business opportunities. It is a hive of activity and a hub for community projects. The vision of our project team and support of European Funding has made the concept a very successful reality and a blueprint for future business innovation projects."



AberInnovation

January 2022 saw the launch of the Mid Wales's first ever challenge fund. The [Mid Wales Challenge Led Launchpad](#) aimed at developing novel solutions to public sector and societal issues through research and innovation whilst offering new market opportunities for businesses and people in Mid Wales.

14 projects aiming to address challenges facing Mid Wales were awarded up to £30,000 each as part of the new programme supported by Ceredigion and Powys County Councils under the UK-wide Community Renewal Fund (CRF) and by the Welsh Government.

The three-month Mid Wales Launchpad enabled these successful businesses to analyse and evaluate the potential of their concepts for eventual deployment through collaboration with academia and regional leadership. Uniquely, the Mid Wales Challenge Led Launchpad also supported a number of individuals across the region via a pioneering work placement and match making scheme.

Examples of the Mid Wales Challenge Launchpad Programme's initial projects include the following:-

[Nellie Technologies](#) - development of their climate change prototype – Little Nellie

[Lohas Recycling](#) – development of the demonstration machine to showcase their solution for poultry manure upcycling and turning it into high quality fertiliser.

[ARCITEKBio](#) - feasibility study for the development of a new formulation of Xylitol from agricultural derived waste, particularly locally produced wheat straw. Xylitol is one of the worlds healthiest sweeteners with significant health benefits in terms of dental, dietary, and diabetic applications.



Meet the Growing Mid Wales teams

Mid Wales Regional Engagement Team (RET)



Claire Miles
Mid Wales Regional
Engagement Manager



Barbara Green
RET Project Support Officer



Ann Elias
TraCC Programmes and
Project Manager

Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership (RSP)



Aggie Caesar-Homden
Partnership Manager



Arinola Ogundeji
RSP Project Support Officer

Mid Wales Portfolio Management Office (PoMO)



Cathy Martin
Operations Manager
Portfolio Management Office



John Collingwood
Sites & Premises
Programme Manager



Stacey-Jayne Oakham
Portfolio Analysis and
Support Officer



Angharad Massow
Communications Officer



Tom Yeo
Energy Lead



David Owen
Digital
Programme Manager



Gareth Marston
European Structural Funds
Manager

Economic Advisory Group (EAG)

Economic Advisory Group



Bronwen Raine
Managing Director
Antur Cymru Enterprise/ Antur Teifi



Douglas Hughes
Managing Director
Douglas Hughes Architects Ltd



Kathryn Austin
Chief People & Marketing Director
of the Heart with Smart Group



Kristian Hicks
Advisor/Strategy Consultant
Business Wales (Welsh Government)



Martin Kiss
CEO
Jenkins & Davies Engineering (J&D)



Steve Lesbirel
Managing Director
Bbi Group

As part of the development of the Mid Wales Growth Deal an Economic Advisory Group has been established comprising business leaders with expertise relevant to the Mid Wales region.

Their role is to provide a business voice on the Growth Deal to the GMW Board and positively promote the Growth Deal within the Mid Wales Business Community.

The Economic Advisory Group had their first in person meeting in September 2022 where they discussed the aims and objectives of the Growth Deal and progress of the overall Portfolio. They have also taken part in recent workshops with project sponsors.

Here we take a closer look at the backgrounds and business experiences of the group:

- Bronwen Raine, Managing Director Antur Cymru Enterprise/ Antur Teifi - An experienced social enterprise director with extensive knowledge of and experience of government entrepreneurship strategy, policy and delivery. Bronwen, who lives in Llangrannog, is an entrepreneur in multiple areas an experienced in the transport, care, tourism and food sectors.
- Douglas Hughes, Managing Director Douglas Hughes Architects Ltd: Newtown, Welshpool, Aberystwyth - His main business, Hughes Architects, has been in existence for over 21 years and has completed over 5000 buildings of every shape and size. From the very outset, Hughes Architects undertook community consultation as one of its core skill sets. This early engagement with key stakeholders was recognised by RIBA as an exemplar practice.
- Kathryn Austin, Chief People & Marketing Director of the Heart with Smart Group (HWS) - Kath, who lives in Cardigan. is a Chartered Member of CIPD and Chartered Management Institute (CMI) and has recently been appointed the Chair for the CMI Cymru Board. Her driving mission is to enable social mobility through education and as part of her current agenda she is developing the HWS Apprenticeship team.
- Kristian Hicks, Advisor/Strategy Consultant. Group Acquisitions Partner at a Global Venture Capital company - Kristian who lives in Gilwern has been a Business Advisor, Strategy Consultant or Chief of Staff to a number of global bluechip, AIM or junior listed equivalent organisations, Government Departments, Financial Institutions, pre-start and established SMEs to resolve the issues of change, transformation, growth or turnaround.
- Martin Kiss, Business Consultant - Recently CEO of Jenkins & Davies Engineering (J&D) where he established J&D as a UK leader in mechanical turnarounds in oil and gas. Previously a procurement consultant to TMD Friction, ABRDN, Nokia, Dorset County Council, CPM, Omnicom and Eircom. Started his career at McColls Retail where he became the Buying Director. Lives near Llandysul.
- Steve Lesbirel, Managing Director Bbi Group - Steve has spent his entire working life in the design and build construction industry - with thirty years at Bbi Group. Bbi has been head quartered in Brecon since 1989 and has grown in turnover from 100k in its first years trading and will turnover 40m in 2022. It currently employs 50 staff and is a large employer in the Brecon town area.

What's on the horizon for 2023

- Following the recent UK Government announcement on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), the regional investment plan for Mid Wales has received formal [approval](#). A [report](#), setting out the strategy on the Mid Wales UKSPF was presented to both Ceredigion and Powys County Council's Cabinets where members approved the governance and management arrangements for the Mid Wales allocation of the fund. It will take time to finalise the processes around applying for funding and put together agreements. Both

Ceredigion and Powys councils will look to issue calls for applications when ready. Keep an eye on our social media feed for updates.

- **Mid Wales Growth Deal** Project developments: 2023 will be an important year for the projects as they develop their business cases further and demonstrate their need for public funding and the potential positive impact for the region.
- The next key milestone for the Growth Deal is the unlocking of the capital funding to begin delivering the project proposals within the Portfolio. This will involve updating and approval of the Portfolio Business Case which sits behind the projects and programmes and going through an assurance review to ensure our governance and management process are robust.
- A shortlist of twelve strategic employment sites has been identified pan-region and the early part of 2023 will see the detailed interrogation of these options with a view to selecting those that show most promise for inclusion in the first tranche of the **Sites & Premises Programme**.
- The **Digital Programme** has identified a long list of possible opportunities and interventions to be further considered and developed, recognising that the programme and potential projects will need to be flexible in order to effectively respond to the ever-changing environment in which the Programme operates. The priority at this time is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the current connectivity levels across the region, with mapping work influencing where investment should be directed, and which future projects will be prioritised.
- The launch of the **Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership Employment and Skills plan for 2022-2025** will take place in spring 2023.
- The Mid Wales Regional Engagement Team will continue to work with key national and regional stakeholders to map activity as ESIF funded operations continue to close during the course of 2023, and feed information and intelligence into planning for the future. The Mid Wales RET will also be helping WEFO in promoting effective project closure, and the legacy of European Funding in Mid Wales.
- In the new year we will have an additional feature in our monthly newsletter where we will shine the spotlight on a different member of the GMW team and their valuable contribution to our ongoing work.
- Save the date! We will be holding a special **Growing Mid Wales event** on 23 March 2023 around the challenges and opportunities for a Growing Economy. More details to follow.

Keep up to date

Keep up to date with Growing Mid Wales news, developments on activity and organisations we support by following our Twitter and Linked In pages:

<https://twitter.com/growingmidwales>

www.linkedin.com/company/growing-mid-wales

We're eager to reach out to as many organisations and businesses across Mid Wales as possible. You can make this possible by following, liking and sharing our pages.

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