



Growing Mid Wales November 2024

Welcome to the November edition of the Growing Mid Wales newsletter!

As the autumn season unfolds, we are thrilled to bring you the latest updates and success stories from across Mid Wales. This month, we spotlight the remarkable achievements made possible through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, showcasing inspiring projects that are fostering community growth, supporting local businesses, and enhancing skills throughout Ceredigion and Powys.

In this issue, you'll find insights from our UKSPF Regional Manager, Natalie Chambers, a feature on the recent Powys Business Awards, an opportunity not to miss if you're looking to expand your business and much more.

Helping to grow opportunity in Mid Wales,

The Growing Mid Wales team

[Cover: As part of the Caru Powys project mentioned in our Shared Prosperity Fund feature, a community clean-up on the Treowen housing estate in Newtown which included children from Treowen Primary School.]

Contents

- Spotlight on the impact of the Shared Prosperity Fund in Mid Wales
- Supporting Business Growth survey
- Meet the Team: Natalie Chambers, UKSPF Regional Manager
- Other news - New round of funding from the Agri-Food Tech Launchpad / Powys Business Awards / Final call for nominations for Ceredigion business and community awards / Places in Mid Wales starting to see the benefits of full fibre broadband

Spotlight on the impact of the Shared Prosperity Fund in Mid Wales

We manage the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) in Mid Wales in order to deliver our Regional Investment Plan. We work closely with the local delivery teams in Ceredigion and Powys County Councils in ensuring we have a broad mix of projects that will help us to achieve the opportunities and address the challenges in the region.

As we embrace the autumn season, we are excited to showcase the transformative projects funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) across Mid Wales. This edition of our newsletter highlights the remarkable case studies from Ceredigion and Powys, each illustrating the positive influence of local initiatives on our communities, businesses, and environment.

From the resounding success of Craft Festival Wales at Cardigan Castle to the empowering Caru Powys initiative that enhances community pride and environmental responsibility, these projects exemplify the essence of collaboration and innovation. Our focus on diverse areas such as supporting local businesses, enhancing skills, and nurturing community well-being underscores the commitment of our region to foster sustainable growth and resilience.

Join us as we explore how these initiatives are making a real difference, showcasing the creativity, determination, and spirit of the people, businesses and organisations of Mid Wales.

Since Mid Wales' Regional Investment Plan was approved by the UK Government in December 2022, a total of 166* projects have been awarded funding in the region. Over a staggering £40 million has been committed to the projects.

*Further projects have been approved under the umbrella grant schemes such as [Cynnal y Cardi](#) in Ceredigion and Making a [Difference in Powys](#).

The Shared Prosperity Fund programme is broken down into four priority areas (figures from October 2024):



Investment priority: Communities and Place

CEREDIGION: Craft Festival Wales hailed a huge success as over 3,500 people attend event at Cardigan Castle

The inaugural Craft Festival Wales, held at Cardigan Castle at the beginning of September, was declared a resounding success, attracting over 3,500 visitors. Organised by Sarah James MBE and Nina Fox, the festival exceeded expectations, showcasing 80 craft professionals from across the UK, many from Mid and West Wales. Crafts on display included jewellery, pottery, textiles, furniture, and glasswork, with makers selling their unique, handcrafted products directly to the public.

The festival, a not-for-profit initiative, was funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), administered by Cynnal y Cardi for Ceredigion County Council, alongside support from the Arts Council of Wales and the Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust (QUEST).

In addition to the craft stalls, over 400 children took part in free craft activities over the weekend, led by organisations such as Amgueddfa Cymru, Llantarnam Grange, and Small World Theatre. Attendees also enjoyed live performances from artists and groups including Hijinx, Kitsch 'n' Sync, Mari Mathias, Lowri Evans, Disclaimers, and the Aberystwyth Silver Band.

The festival offered a wide array of workshops, demonstrations, and masterclasses from prominent makers such as internationally exhibited ceramicist Ashraf Hanna, Carmarthenshire broom maker Rosa Harradine, greenwood worker Michelle Mateo, and renowned jewellery designer Ann Catrin Evans. This diverse programme gave attendees the chance to learn directly from some of the UK's finest craft practitioners.

Sarah James expressed her delight with the festival's success, saying, "I'm absolutely thrilled that so many people came to Craft Festival Wales. We were hoping for a good turnout, but the number of visitors has exceeded all expectations. This was such a special event with a fantastic sense of community and celebration amongst our exhibitors and visitors all weekend."

She also offered her gratitude to the funders, project partners, volunteers, and the people of Ceredigion, stating, “I’m extremely grateful to our funders, project partners, the Craft Festival team, volunteers, our exhibitors, demonstrators, and the wonderful people of Ceredigion for helping us to bring this event to my hometown”.

Craft Festival Wales was awarded £30,000 of UK SPF Funding and organised in association with Ceredigion County Council, Arts Council of Wales, and QEST, with numerous local partners and supporters contributing to its success.

For information about the Craft Festival, visit: www.craftfestival.co.uk



1 - Stalls at the Cardigan craft festival by local producers



2 - Stalls at the Cardigan craft festival by local producers

POWYS: Caru Powys - a collaboration between Keep Wales Tidy and Powys County Council

Building on an existing partnership between the two organisations as part of the Caru Cymru project, Caru Powys set out to improve the environment for people and wildlife.

“Caru Powys enables local communities to take pride, action, and responsibility for the quality of their local environment and provides a range of practical volunteering opportunities,” said Jodie Griffith, Project Officer for Powys with Keep Wales Tidy. “It is also assisting with conservation schemes and improving biodiversity.”

Its work has included the drafting of a Local Environmental Quality (LEQ) action plan, litter surveys and a range of clean up and behaviour change campaigns in different environments and communities. It has also run events, and set up schemes, to encourage the reuse and repurposing of materials, and the shared use of tools and equipment.

Powys has 12 formal litter picking hubs and three informal drop-in hubs, which have been supported through the project, with litter picking kit, bags, and training and advice provided.

During the first year of Caru Powys, the kits were borrowed 136 times with 1,357 volunteers getting involved in litter picking.

So far, the Caru Powys team has worked alongside and supported 78 different groups, organisations and businesses. It has also delivered two out of three planned community art installations

Caru Powys in numbers:

- Neighbourhood improvements – 182.
- Local events or activities supported – 1,800.
- Volunteering opportunities supported – 174.

Caru Powys was awarded £115,929 of UK SPF Funding for 2023-25.

For more information on the Caru Powys Volunteer Litter Picking kits, visit:

<https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/8026/Volunteer-Litter-Picking>



3 - A community clean-up on the Treowen housing estate in Newtown which included children from Treowen Primary School.





Investment priority: Supporting Local Business

CEREDIGION: Small business success in West Wales - How Cynnal y Cardi and Antur Cymru are empowering local growth

Small businesses in west Wales are thriving, thanks to the support of Antur Cymru, an enterprise agency that has helped them secure grants from the Cynnal y Cardi Fund. This fund, delivered by Ceredigion County Council via the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund, has been instrumental in the success of local businesses Brodwaith Tysul Embroidery.

Brodwaith Tysul owner Abby Reid benefited from the Cynnal y Cardi Fund by expanding her embroidery business and worked on revitalizing Llandysul's High Street. "Antur Cymru has been the cheerleader and coach refining my game," Abby said.

The Cynnal y Cardi Fund focuses on sustainable solutions to economic, social, and environmental challenges in Ceredigion. It supports community and neighbourhood infrastructure, digital infrastructure, capacity building, and more.

Local businesses, with Antur Cymru's guidance, are now better equipped to grow and succeed in a challenging post-pandemic environment.

Antur Cymru Business Support South was awarded £352,008 of UK SPF funding.

Visit Antur Cymru to find out more on how they support rural businesses and communities:

<https://anturcymru.org.uk/>



4 - Brodwaith Tysul owner Abby Reid

POWYS: Reviving Powys' Events Sector - How the Powys Event Network is Boosting Post-Pandemic Recovery

Powys Event Network Development is a project designed by Powys County Council's Economy and Climate Service to support the events sector and help it to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic.

It has provided networking opportunities, to help organisers share best practice, with representatives from 44 different events taking part and 20 have made use of funding to pay for training, so far.

They have had marketing work done for them and have had access to online seminars on the best ways to promote their activities.

“Our biggest challenge, every year, has been to spread the word about our productions,” said Katy Sinnadurai, Artistic Director for Brecon Festival Ballet. “Getting help with that was really attractive to us. We want to let more people know that there are huge ballet productions, of a scale that you would normally only see in a city, on at Theatr Brycheiniog in Brecon.”

Presteigne Festival was another of the events to access the support available and Festival Producer, Alison Giles said: “Powys Event Network has allowed us to be in touch with our local authority in a way that has not been possible for many years. It's helped us to feel that

we're a part of shaping the area's future and, we hope, to seeing Powys better recognised as being rich in creativity and culture.

“We really welcome the initiative and we're looking forward to growing on the links with Powys County Council and with other creative organisations that it's helped us to make.”

Powys Event Network Development received £100,000 in UK SPF funding for 2023-25.

Visit [Powys Events - Powys County Council](#) for event project information, networking, and training or to sign up your event.



5 - Brecon Festival Ballet's production of Swan Lake Act 2 earlier this year



6 - Presteigne Festival concert

Investment priority: People and Skills

CEREDIGION: Ensuring Success - AnTir Ceredigion Project

This project has enabled Tir Coed to deliver woodland, nature, food growing and heritage skills courses, taster sessions and volunteering opportunities across Ceredigion.

Building on the success of the AnTir Feasibility in Ceredigion pilot project funded through the UK Government's Community Renewal Fund during 2021, the provision can offer employees specific skills, accredited learning and experience relevant for green jobs.

The provision includes one-on-one mentoring, advice and guidance, supporting a person-centred progression towards greater economic and community engagement.

The practical work undertaken during the AnTir Ceredigion Project is improving community spaces and biodiversity for the benefit of all.

Director of Operations, Cath Seymour, said: "The funding has been great news for the future of Tir Coed in Ceredigion. It means we can continue to implement the learnings from the research and development phases of our AnTir Feasibility project, continue to support disadvantaged people, offer more targeted training to those aspiring to progress to outdoor or volunteering jobs, and improve community spaces for the common good. It gives us the resources to play our small part in responding to key challenges facing the people of Ceredigion, in helping local communities become more resilient."

If you would like to find out more about the Ceredigion AnTir Project and find out how to get involved, contact: info@tircoed.org.uk.

The Ceredigion AnTir Project was awarded £172,056 from the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, supported by Ceredigion County Council.



7 - AnTir Project

POWYS: 'Riding' high on ATV success

Seren Cook, 16 yrs, from Builth Wells Powys has recently taken advantage of the AgriStart programme, fitting in a practical hands-on one-day course between her studies at six form college.

While a number of the training courses took her fancy, Seren decided to start her accredited training journey, under the Lantra Wales run AgriStart programme, with an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) course delivered by Jimmy Hughes Services.

The course was one of many on offer to residents in Powys aimed at those from non-farming backgrounds, from woodland management, rodent control, all the way through to conservation and sustainability.

The AgriStart programme project is funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, supported by Powys County Council.

All courses on offer under AgriStart are delivered through Lantra's trusted Awards network with Jimmy Hughes Services experts in providing training courses of this nature in the land based sector.

While still early days since completing the course, Seren is already seeing the benefits, she said: 'I'm certainly now more confident in a range of ATV activity – from towing heavy loads through to driving on more challenging terrains. Whilst I had some knowledge already of driving a Quad this course has certainly increased my skills, safety whilst using ATVs, as well as ensured I'm accredited in case I ever need to use it in any future work environment.'

Attendees on the day were from all ages and experience capabilities, learning involved both a theory and practical element. With AgriStart focused specifically on those from non-farming backgrounds the courses also provided a route into land-based work for those in attendance with an accreditation of those key skills sorely needed in the sector.

With this course now under her belt Seren is setting her sights at completing other free AgriStart courses prior to the end of programme in 2024 and certainly "encourages others to take advantage of this package of support for those living in Powys."

To view the courses on offer and contact the team visit www.agristart.wales

The AgriStart project was awarded £155,000 in UK Shared Prosperity Funding for 2023-25.



8 - Seren Cook inflating her ATV skills during the course.

Investment priority: Multiply (adult numeracy)

CEREDIGION: Growing Minds and Skills - How a Ceredigion gardening project is nurturing numeracy and wellbeing

A community learning programme in Ceredigion is helping adults develop numeracy skills through a gardening project.

Dysgu Bro Ceredigion has partnered with Gorwelion Day Hospital in Aberystwyth to offer these sessions, that run from February to November each year.

The gardening group, which meets weekly, involves hospital clients and staff in activities like soil cultivation, planting, and harvesting. The project not only fosters a connection with

nature but also provides significant mental health benefits, including improved mood, reduced stress, and social interaction.

The initiative is part of Multiply, a UK Shared Prosperity Fund project aimed at enhancing adult numeracy skills.

Liz Porter, a Dysgu Bro Multiply tutor, integrates maths into gardening tasks, such as measuring, planning, and cost calculation. Some participants are also working toward an accredited numeracy qualification from Agored Cymru.

One group member shared: "I have found coming to the garden group really beneficial for my mental health, and I enjoy being out in the open air, socializing with others, and learning new skills."

Porter noted that participants have successfully refreshed their numeracy skills and supported one another in achieving their goals.

For more information or to access numeracy support, individuals can contact Dysgu Bro's Multiply team at admin@dysgubro.org.uk.

The Multiply Key Skills Tim Gydol Oes was awarded £866,863 of UK SPF funding.



9 - Gorwelion Day Hospital garden

POWYS: Number Up! Empowering parents in Powys with numeracy skills for life and business

Stori Powys, part of Powys County Council's Cultural Services, launched the Number Up! For Parents initiative to reach the hardest-to-reach learners, including those not in work and other groups identified locally as in need of support. This programme aims to enhance numeracy skills and boost confidence in adults across the region.

To achieve this, Equal Education Partners was commissioned to deliver four online numeracy courses. So far, nine participants have earned the Agored Level 1 qualification through Coleg Gwent, and three have achieved the Essential Skills Level 2 qualification via Adult Learning Wales.

One such success story is Diane Wiltshire from Llandrindod Wells, who completed the Essential Skills qualification and has since started her own business. Diane shared, "It's really helped with my maths anxiety, giving me the confidence boost I needed to go for it with my business. Every time I have a maths problem now, be it with cash flow or turnover, I have the tools, things I can really hold on to from the course, that I can put into use."

The programme also benefited a Ukrainian refugee, who asked to remain anonymous. She said, "I would like to set up my own business and help my child with their homework, and now feel that I am on the right path to do so."

In addition to the online courses, Number Up! has hosted 57 informal workshops and activities across 11 library branches, engaging 298 adults and 407 children. These sessions, including British Sign Language numeracy, coding, cooking, stop-motion animation, family budgeting, and maths homework support, are designed to make learning accessible and fun.

The Number Up! initiative received £122,000 in UK SPF funding for 2022-25.

Find out more about how Number Up! is building maths confidence for parents and carers in Powys: <https://www.storipowys.org.uk/number-up>



10 - Children and parents enjoying one of the stop-motion animation sessions for families held at Rhayader Library.

The SPF story in Mid Wales continues...

For more news on projects that have received UKSPF funding, go to the News pages on Ceredigion and Powys County Council websites:

[Ceredigion County Council](#)

[Powys County Council](#)

Planning to grow your business?

Join other Mid Wales businesses who have already shared their thoughts on potential opportunities for capital grant funding! Be part of the conversation and take part in our survey now: <https://bit.ly/SupportingEnterpriseSurvey>



Supporting Business Growth

Planning to Grow Your Business?

Share your expansion plans in our survey and explore potential opportunities for capital grant funding to help you succeed!

<https://bit.ly/SupportingEnterpriseSurvey>



Meet the Team - Natalie Chambers, UKSPF Regional Manager

When did you start with the team?

I joined the GMW team in July 2024 on my return from maternity leave.

Can you tell us more about your role?

I provide regional coordination and support to deliver the UKSPF across the Mid Wales region, working closely with local delivery teams in Ceredigion and Powys County Councils to deliver a successful programme and reporting this to UK Government. I meet regularly with other Lead Local Authorities across Wales and governmental departments to share the successes and opportunities the fund presents.

What are your current priorities?

I'm currently focusing on supporting the local delivery teams in their approach to monitoring and evaluation as we near the end of the programme with an emphasis on planning closure and maximising effective spend.

I'm also looking to future funding opportunities that may come through considering lessons learnt of what's been done well and what could be improved. We don't always have the space to stop and evaluate, with independent evaluations taking place and the programme coming to an end, supporting these tasks provides a great opportunity for review. The budget at the end of the month by UK Government is eagerly anticipated and many conversations are being had to ensure that local businesses and organisations can continue to receive support from the GMW team.



What developments have you seen over the years?

I'm fairly new to economy and regeneration however working in the public sector I've seen a range of attitudes and approaches to regional working and the structure of the GMW team, where regional coordination and expertise meets local delivery and understanding, strikes a balance of best of both worlds providing effective impact and I hope to see this continue to develop.

What's been your biggest achievement?

That's a tough one... I don't think I have one big achievement but the smaller everyday consistency and discipline I put into everything that builds to those bigger achievements is

something I've grown to be proud of. If you don't show up every day you can't have the big wins.

I ran a couple of ultra marathons in 2022 to raise money and awareness for mental health and suicide prevention. I was proud of all the conversations it started and the money raised but the achievement was turning up for all the runs that had to take place before I got to the start line.

One word that sums up the Growing Mid Wales Team:

Energetic – the enthusiasm and passion within the team is so infectious, being part of such an inspiring team makes me try harder, think smarter and want to contribute further to the success of the team.



Other news

New round of funding from the Agri-Food Tech Launchpad

🚀 Exciting News, the new round of funding from the Agri-Food Tech Launchpad is NOW OPEN! 🍌 Micro and small businesses can apply for grants between £25,000 and £100,000 to drive innovation 🍌 Find out more and apply here: <https://apply-for-innovation-funding.service.gov.uk/competition/2063/overview/88ae1bdf-63d1-4fe8-88f6-c97cbec99d8e#summary>



Powys Business Awards

Celebrating Powys Business Success and Regional Skills Engagement

The recent Powys Business Awards was not only a celebration of business excellence but also an exciting moment for the Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership (RSP). Councillor James Gibson-Watt, Leader of Powys County Council, opened the event by welcoming attendees and highlighting the crucial role businesses play in the region's economy. His message was clear: businesses in Powys should actively engage with the network of RSP cluster groups. For those not yet involved, there's no better time to get started—visit our website to discover how you can benefit, www.midwalesrsp.wales

The event was a brilliant showcase for the Regional Skills Partnership, with Emma Thomas, Chair of the Mid Wales RSP, serving as one of the judges. Emma had the honour of judging a key award, the People Development Award sponsored by NPTC Group of Colleges, which was awarded to EOM Electrical Contractors Ltd, Newtown. Emma also presented the Technology & Innovation Award, sponsored by Aberystwyth University, which was awarded to Machynlleth-based Atherton Bikes. Recently expanding their operations, Atherton Bikes has been making headlines with their innovation in the cycling industry.

Reflecting on the event, Emma Thomas said:

"The Powys Business Awards truly demonstrated the incredible range and strength of businesses across the region. It was inspiring to see so many innovative and successful enterprises being celebrated. I hope that many of the businesses featured, as well as others throughout the region, will work with the Regional Skills Partnership to further strengthen skills provision, increase employment opportunities and drive future success. By collaborating, we can ensure that Mid Wales continues to thrive and grow."

The event highlighted how collaboration between businesses and the RSP can help drive innovation, skills development, and future success in Mid Wales. If your business isn't yet involved with the RSP, visit our website today to learn more and get connected with our cluster groups.

Stay tuned for more exciting developments as we continue to support businesses and nurture talent in Mid Wales.



11 - Emma Thomas, Chair of the Mid Wales RSP, with the Technology & Innovation Award winners, Machynlleth-based Atherton Bikes



12 - Councillor James Gibson-Watt, Leader of Powys County Council,



13 - Emma Thomas, Chair of the Mid Wales RSP,

Final call for nominations for Ceredigion business and community awards

Entries close today, Wednesday 13 November, with the awards recognising the exceptional contributions and achievements of businesses, community projects, and individuals across the County.

The awards feature 12 categories, ranging from innovations in the community, to recognising young entrepreneurs, the tourist industry, successful events, and businesses that support the Welsh language.

For more information on the Gwobrau Caru Ceredigion Awards 2024 and to submit your nominations, visit www.ceredigion.gov.uk/caru-ceredigion-awards



Places in Mid Wales starting to see the benefits of full fibre broadband

Exciting news for Mid Wales! Residents in Llanbrynmair are already enjoying the benefits of full fibre broadband thanks to [Openreach](#), connecting 920 properties through the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme.

But that's just the beginning! There are 12 other voucher projects currently underway across Mid Wales, set to connect over 6,000 homes!

The Mid Wales Growth Deal Digital Programme plays a vital role in supporting projects like these, driving connectivity and enhancing digital access across the region.

Residents of Berriew, Cardigan, Kerry, Llandysul, Llanrhaeadr, Llanwrtyd Wells, Llyswen, New Radnor, Rhydlewis, Tregaron, and Tregynon can pledge their vouchers and help improve connectivity in their communities by visiting [Connect my Community](#). If your community is not listed, further build phases will continue under the UK Government's Project Gigabit Programme, starting in 2025. Currently, over 50% of our region already has Fibre to the Premises connections available. Residents interested in upgrading to full fibre can check their availability at [Ultrafast Full Fibre Broadband | Openreach](#)

Let's make Mid Wales a digital powerhouse!

Keep up to Date

Need to catch up on what's been discussed in our meetings? Here's a reminder of where you can find the minutes for the following meetings:

- All minutes relating to the Growing Mid Wales Board are hosted on Powys County Council [website](#).
- Papers relating to the Growing Mid Wales Partnership can be found on our [website](#).

Keep up to date with Growing Mid Wales news, developments on activity and organisations we support by following our X, LinkedIn pages, and YouTube channel:

<https://twitter.com/growingmidwales>

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

<https://www.youtube.com/@TCC-GMW>

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.

Disclaimer: As a Growing Mid Wales Stakeholder you receive these emails so that we can share news and information with you on a regular basis. You can inform us if you no longer wish to receive these emails by emailing growingmidwales@ceredigion.gov.uk.

