



Growing Mid Wales April 2025

Celebrating 3 Years of Shared Prosperity Funding in Mid Wales

Legacy | Inspiration | What's Next?

This April newsletter shines a spotlight on the legacy of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) in our region. Over the past three years, Ceredigion and Powys have delivered more than 160 projects across towns, valleys and communities – empowering people, supporting businesses, and investing in pride of place.

As the current programme draws to a close, we celebrate standout success stories, explore the impact so far, and share insights into what's next in a changing funding landscape. We know many are asking 'Will there be more?' — and while future funding will be more limited, the partnerships and projects seeded here will continue to grow.

Let's take stock, be inspired, and prepare for the next chapter.

Helping to grow opportunity in Mid Wales,

The Growing Mid Wales team

[Cover: Pagliacci, a bold and theatrical production by a Mid Wales opera company, who benefited from funding, read more in newsletter]

In this issue

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- Evaluation findings: What did the SPF Programme Deliver?
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The SPF Legacy

In April 2022, Ceredigion and Powys County Councils were allocated £42.4 million for local investment through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This fund aimed to level up communities through investment in Communities and Place, Supporting Local Businesses, People and Skills, and Multiply.

Key Successes: Evaluated by Wavehill

What we've achieved

Over 160 projects funded across Communities & Place, Local Business, and People & Skills, including:

Support for over 100 businesses



Training for thousands of local residents



Investment in green spaces, markets, and rural hubs



Improved digital inclusion across the region



Across the region, the Shared Prosperity Fund has supported creative, entrepreneurial and community-driven projects.

We are thrilled to share the independently evaluated successes of our recent initiatives, showcasing the positive impact across business growth, community engagement, skills development, and collaboration. The efforts highlighted below are a testament to the hard work and commitment of everyone involved.

Business Growth and Support

Our business grant schemes have had a remarkable effect, supporting 217 new and existing businesses. These efforts resulted in **503** Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) job impacts and contributed to an impressive **£5.8 million** increase in turnover, with a net additional GVA impact of **£1.9 million**. More than **three-quarters** of businesses reported increased growth

aspirations, with many even hiring staff for the first time, marking a significant milestone in their development.

Community Engagement and Infrastructure

We exceeded our targets for local events and activities, greatly enhancing community engagement and fostering a sense of unity. Additionally, our focus on environmental improvements led to substantial achievements, such as the creation of new and improved cycleways, footpaths, and a notable increase in tree planting, further enhancing the local environment.

Skills Development

The programme has made a profound impact on skills development, especially in areas like life skills and support for individuals who are furthest from the labour market. This has helped many individuals secure employment and improve their prospects. Additionally, there was a strong emphasis on building green and digital skills, aligning with broader regional development priorities and ensuring that participants are well-equipped for future opportunities.

Collaborative Approach

Collaboration has been at the heart of our success. Strong partnerships between Ceredigion and Powys councils have led to effective governance and seamless management systems. Our umbrella projects have been particularly successful in making support more accessible to small community groups and businesses, ensuring that no one is left behind.

Flexibility and Adaptability

One of the key strengths of the programme has been its broad and flexible design, which has allowed us to respond quickly to emerging needs and changing demands. This flexibility, combined with local autonomy, has empowered stakeholders to take ownership of their priorities, fostering meaningful local decision-making and ensuring the initiatives truly reflect community needs.

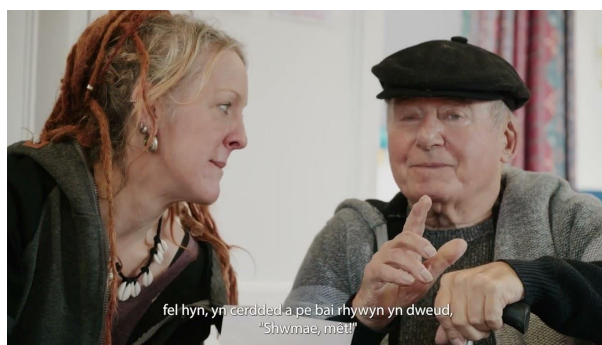
These successes demonstrate the power of collaboration, adaptability, and targeted support in driving positive change. We look forward to continuing this momentum and building on these achievements in the future!

Case Studies: How SPF funding has made an impact across the region

The following case studies demonstrate the real-world impact of SPF support on local businesses and communities. From fashion to food, these stories reflect the diversity of initiatives made possible by this investment.

Innovation and enterprise

The following videos showcase two powerful examples from Ceredigion of how SPF funding has empowered wellbeing and enterprise.



1 - Arts4Wellbeing Creative Cafe



2 - Antur Cymru – supporting local enterprise in Ceredigion

Arts Thrive with SPF Support

Pagliacci, a bold and theatrical production by a Mid Wales opera company, almost closed its doors — until SPF funding brought it back from the brink. This is just one example of how cultural projects have survived and thrived across Powys.

Full story: <https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/17914/Arts-fund-stopped-opera-and-theatre-firm-from-going-bust>



ani-bendod

Support for the arts has been critical in preserving local culture and sustaining creative organisations during challenging times. The following example illustrates how SPF helped keep a prominent Mid Wales production company afloat.

From a small farm workshop in Bronant to an international brand, ani-bendod has embroidered Welsh culture onto thousands of t-shirts, gifts, and hearts. With support from ARFOR and Cynnal y Cardi via the Shared Prosperity Fund, Anwen James has built a thriving rural business that blends creativity, sustainability, and community.

“This support has enabled us as a family to make a living in our community, securing two full-time jobs, in the hope of expanding on this in the future. We can farm hand in hand with running a business in the countryside.” – Anwen James, Founder

Full story: www.ceredigion.gov.uk/resident/news/2025/arfor-support-bears-fruit-in-ceredigion/



3 - Anwen James, Founder, ani-bendod

From local roots to national recognition – how SPF funding helped launch a Powys business onto Dragons’ Den

One ambitious Powys-based business has risen through the ranks thanks to targeted support from Powys County Council and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). The funding played a crucial role in helping the enterprise scale up, strengthen its business plan, and prepare for wider growth — proving how local investment can unlock national opportunities.

This backing helped the business reach an impressive milestone: attracting the attention of investors on BBC’s Dragons’ Den, where it pitched for national support. The achievement is a

testament to the power of local and SPF support in nurturing homegrown talent and giving businesses the tools to step confidently onto bigger stages.

Full story [here](#).



Caru Ceredigion Awards 2024 main winner

SPF funding has played a key role in supporting the growth of Cigydd Sion Jones Butcher, a local business rooted in quality, sustainability, and community. Led by experienced butcher Sion Jones, the funding has enabled the business to expand its offer of locally sourced produce, strengthen ties with nearby farmers, and invest in community engagement — including educational visits to schools to promote sustainable food choices.

Sion's dedication was recognised at a recent awards ceremony, where he received the Caru Ceredigion Award and was named the overall winner across all categories. His success story highlights how the UK Shared Prosperity Fund can empower small businesses to thrive while making a lasting impact on their communities.

Full story [here](#).



4 - Sion Jones from Llanon, Ceredigion at the 2024 Caru Ceredigion Awards

From 'egg chasing' to egg production

Among the recipients of business growth grants from Powys County Council last year - which totalled just under £1 million - was Welsh rugby international Dan Lydiate.

Dan, who is currently plying his trade with the Newport-based Dragons and has 75 caps for Wales and the British and Irish Lions, has set up his own egg production company on his family's farm in Abbeycwmhir.

No6 Egg Company, named after the shirt number he usually wears on the rugby field as a blindside flanker, received just over £4,000 from the county council towards new farm management software in 2024.

Full story [here](#).



5 - Dan Lydiate, No6 Egg

Cynnal y Cardi Grant supports a thriving Penuwch business to expand

Welshhomestead Smokery is an award-winning smokehouse on a small holding at Maesyffynnon, Penuwch and has grown considerably since its launch in 2019. They recently opened their new workshop and kitchen which has been supported by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) through the Cynnal y Cardi Fund which is administrated and supported by Ceredigion County Council.

Full story [here](#).



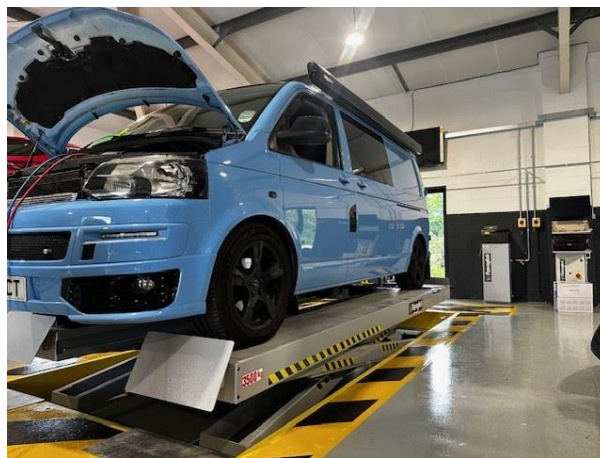
71 companies helped to grow with grants worth just under £1m

Seventy-one Powys companies were helped to expand, or secure their future, last year with growth grants from the county council totalling £994,000.

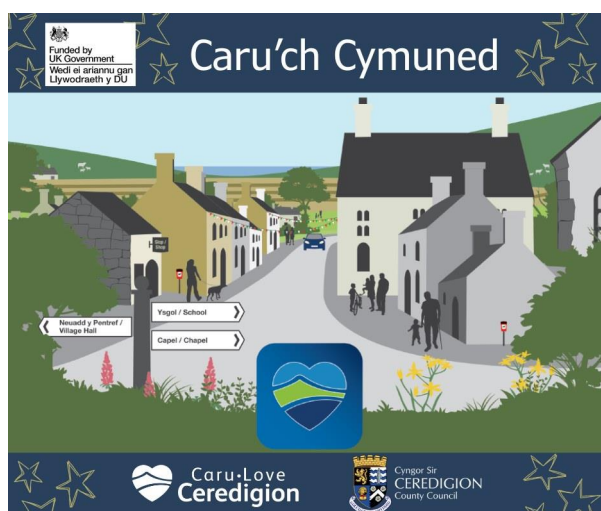
The money was put towards projects costing more than £10 million in total, with the businesses themselves investing £9.4 million.

The 71 companies are involved in everything from designer furniture to factory robotics and received between £940 and £25,000 each after the council secured £1.2 million for the scheme, from the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund.

For a breakdown of the companies and the sectors they're in, see the full story [here](#).



Upcoming events this spring & summer



SPF may be winding down, but our region continues to buzz with events and opportunities that have benefitted from SPF funding. Here's what's coming up this spring and summer:

Caru'ch Cymuned / Love your Community NEW Category for Caru Ceredigion Awards 2025

Applications will shortly be open for a new category in the 2025 Caru Ceredigion Awards. The **Caru'ch Cymuned** award will recognise and celebrate the work of town and village communities across Ceredigion in keeping their community tidy, arranging events and providing services to the people of the area.

Communities large and small are being encouraged to enter. The **Caru'ch Cymuned** campaign is aimed at fostering and celebrating a sense of pride in communities across the county, while encouraging people to take part in activities and initiatives that enhance the environment, support local businesses, and strengthen community cohesion and resilience.

There are three categories in the competition for 2025/ 2026 Awards; Small villages, Villages and Towns. The Caru Ceredigion Awards are funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and are administrated by the Cynnal y Cardi team at Ceredigion County Council. The campaign will open soon, in the meantime please feel free to contact the team by email to: ce.cynnalycardi@ceredigion.gov.uk

Call for applications for Cynnal y Cardi events fund



Funded by
UK Government
Wedi ei ariannu gan
Llywodraeth y DU



Cronfa Digwyddiadau Cynnal y Cardi AR AGOR	Cynnal y Cardi Events Fund NOW OPEN
<p>Mae Cronfa Digwyddiadau Cynnal y Cardi yn agor am yr ail flwyddyn yn olynol ar gyfer busnesau a chymunedau yng Ngheredigion. Bydd dau becyn cyllid ar gael wedi ei ariannu drwy CFfGDU:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grant digwyddiadau bach (Isafswm £2,000 – uchafswm o £10,000)• Grant digwyddiadau mawr (Lleiafswm o £30,000) <p>Bydd pob grant yn selliedig ar 70% o'r costau cymwys. Rhaid i arian cyfatebol o leiafswm o 30% fod yn arian parod (yn hytrach na "mewn nwyddau")</p> <p>Rhaid cwblhau pob gweithgaredd, a hawlio cyllid erbyn 31ain o Ionawr, 2026.</p> <p>Am fwy o wybodaeth am y gronfa sydd ar gael, ewch i: https://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/business/funding-and-grants/cynnal-y-cardi-events-programme-fund/</p>	<p>The Cynnal y Cardi Events fund is open for the second year running for businesses and communities in Ceredigion. There will be two funding packages on offer funded through UKSPF:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small events grant (Minimum £2,000 – maximum £10,000)• Large events grant (Minimum of £30,000) <p>Each grant award will be based on 70% of eligible costs. Match funding of 30% must be in cash (rather than "in kind")</p> <p>All activity and project expenditure must be completed by the 31st of January 2026.</p> <p>For more information about the available grant go to: https://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/business/funding-and-grants/cynnal-y-cardi-events-programme-fund/</p>



Cyngor Sir
CEREDIGION
County Council

The Cynnal y Cardi event fund is opening for the second year running for businesses and communities in Ceredigion, funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).

The Grant Fund is now open for applications and will close on Thursday 01 May, 2025.

Tourism is an economic sector of vital importance to Ceredigion, representing the third largest employer in the county and we are keen to build on this sector and attract new visitors to the area.

More information on how you can submit an application can be found here: www.ceredigion.gov.uk/business/funding-and-grants/cynnal-y-cardi-events-programme-fund/

Looking Ahead: The Post-2025 Landscape

While we celebrate achievements, it's also important to look to the future. With less funding available beyond March 2025, delivery models will need to evolve and target support more strategically.

As the SPF programme drew to a close in March, it leaves behind a proud legacy. However, it's important to acknowledge the changing landscape. Future funding will be more limited.

Growing Mid Wales is working with partners to ensure continuity where possible — but delivery will be more targeted.

“We’re incredibly proud of what’s been achieved — but we also need to be realistic about what can be delivered with smaller budgets.” – Growing Mid Wales Team

Watch this space!

Other News

Mid Wales Commercial Property Fund – Launch Event Update

We’ve been blown away by the fantastic response to our launch event – thank you to everyone who registered! Due to the exceptionally high level of interest, the event is now fully booked and we’re unable to accommodate any more attendees.



Mid Wales Commercial Property Investment Fund



But don’t worry – if you missed out, we’ve got you covered*. We’ll be hosting a webinar on Thursday, 15th May, from 2:30 to 4:00pm, where we’ll share all the same key information.

To register for the webinar, just drop us an email at growingmidwales@ceredigion.gov.uk – we’d love to have you join us online.

*The fund is targeted at specific business sectors. Eligible applicants must be private businesses that are formally constituted as a Company (Limited Company or Limited by Guarantee) or a Partnership (with a Partnership Agreement), and operate in specific sectors including Construction, Electrical and Plumbing, Information and Communications, Manufacturing, Professional Services, Real Estate, and Wholesale, Retail and Motor Trade. The fund is not open to speculative property developers, public bodies, or charities.

Employing Prison Leavers: Unlocking Potential

Our recent 'Employing Prison Leavers: Unlocking Potential' event was full of inspiration and energy. It focused on breaking stereotypes and encouraging employers to recruit prison leavers.

It was a pleasure to work alongside HMP Berwyn, DWP and Working Wales to make this event possible

If you were unable to attend the event but would like to find out more, email the RSP team: midwalesrsp@powys.gov.uk



Innovating to Optimise Rural Grids Through Agricultural Communities

Continuing with sharing the five successful applicants who received funding to carry out feasibility studies in decarbonising agriculture, watch these clips from **Centre for Energy Equality - HARVEST**, **Severn Wye Energy Agency** and **Challoch Energy**.

Centre for Energy Equality - HARVEST (Holistic Agricultural and Rural Virtual Energy System Transition): Using a decentralised, community-owned model, a virtual power plant that would link household, business, and farm-based renewable energy systems—such as solar panels and batteries. Based in Llanidloes.

Severn Wye Energy Agency - Helping business lower the load: Focusing on implementing Smart Local Energy Systems (SLES) in industrial and business parks, this project aims to reduce energy demand on the grid through local renewable energy generation and battery storage. Based at Four crosses near Welshpool.

Challoch Energy - Village rural energy in Mid Wales: Evaluating the potential for developing a community based, local integrated energy system which will both decarbonise the community and bring financial benefits through more affordable energy. Locations across both counties are being scoped to identify which communities are suitable, aiming for an even split across both Local Authorities.

For further details about the WSRID Challenge Fund and the successful projects, visit <https://www.growingmid.wales/WSRID>.

More information on the next phase in the Welsh Government's Whole Systems Research and Innovation in Decarbonisation (WSRID) Challenge Fund will feature in next month's newsletter.



combine local generation, such as from farming communities and local businesses



The benefits to Mid Wales with this sort of project is to allow you to build new renewables



they could install to reduce their energy use and look at what solar and batteries they could use

We're moving forward on digital connectivity in Mid Wales!

Three exciting projects were approved, at a recent Growing Mid Wales Board, to move forward to boost our region's digital future:

- ◆ Mobile Coverage & Capacity Project – tackling mobile coverage gaps across rural Mid Wales to ensure more reliable provision.
- ◆ Business Park FTTP Project – bringing gigabit full-fibre broadband directly to key business parks to drive productivity and innovation.
- ◆ LoRaWAN Stimulation Project – rolling out low-power, long-range network technology to support smart sensors in farming, manufacturing and more.

These projects are part of our Growth Deal Digital Programme – delivering infrastructure that connects communities and supports economic growth. They have received outline

approval – which means that further detailed development work will be underway over the summer, with delivery anticipated from this autumn.

Watch this space as we move into the next phase!



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.

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