

# North Wales Regional Skills Partnership

Annual Report  
2021-22



Partneriaeth Sgiliau Rhanbarthol  
Gogledd Cymru  
North Wales  
Regional Skills Partnership

# North Wales Regional Skills Partnership Annual Report 2021-22

Welcome to the North Wales Regional Skills Partnership's 2021/22 Annual Report showcasing how we have been pushing forward the skills and employability agenda over the past 12 months in line with our strategic priorities and in response to the unprecedented challenges brought about by the pandemic.

As we publish this report and settle into a post-COVID world with geo-political headwinds, a cost-of-living crisis, and an increased urgency to tackle climate change, we are acutely aware that the labour market has changed significantly too. The last year has presented many challenges for employers and individuals alike as we have adjusted to a very competitive labour market with high vacancy numbers, and staff shortages in key sectors.

Within this context, the North Wales Regional Skills Partnership (RSP) has made good progress in working towards regional priorities, as set out in our three-year strategy, and helping to address skills gaps and shortages.

During the year, a primary focus has been monitoring the impact of COVID-19 to enable Welsh Government and other stakeholders to understand regional employment and skills impacts and react accordingly. We have also carried out desktop research to support Welsh Government in developing the Young Person's Guarantee, launched the Green Skills Report, established two new employer cluster sub-groups and continued to promote apprenticeships, including degree apprenticeship opportunities.

Increasingly, we see the Partnership's core role being to inform and inspire, both at an individual level regarding the range of employment opportunities that exist, or will emerge in the future, as well as at an organisational level helping businesses tap into the high quality skills development provision that is available to support their own needs and aspirations.



During this year, working in collaboration with partners, we have delivered numerous campaigns aimed at young people and job seekers to inspire and inform them about careers opportunities available within our key and growth sectors.

As we look ahead, our focus will be on updating our skills and employability plan. We will identify the key skills and employment priorities across the region, ensuring strong connection with regional economic priorities such as Growth Deal projects. Also, working closely with employers we will collate labour market intelligence to help inform Welsh Government's decision making centred around digital skills, the Welsh language, employability and net zero skills.

There's lots to do, but with our #teamnorthwales approach much can be accomplished.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Roberts'.

David Roberts, Chair – North Wales  
Regional Skills Partnership

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# 1. Introduction

There are four Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs) in Wales, covering North Wales, South West, Mid Wales and South East Wales. Each RSP produces and analyses labour market intelligence, engages with regional employers and advises the Welsh Government on skills provision in the light of employer-led insight. The RSPs form part of the Welsh Government's broader approach to regional economic development. This includes the commitment in the Economic Action Plan to strengthened strategic planning at regional level and the development of the North Wales Growth Deal and City Deals.

The North Wales Regional Skills Partnership brings together employers, skills providers and key local stakeholders to better understand and resolve skills mismatches at a regional and local level. The aim of the partnerships work is to identify current and future regional skills needs and using this intelligence to shape the provision of post-16 education and training.

In 2019, Welsh Government asked the RSP to take a more strategic, long-term view of the skills system in the region by producing a three year Regional Skills and Employment Plan 2019-2022. The aim of the plan is to get the North Wales skills system working harder and smarter to meet jobs, now and in the future. The North Wales RSP launched and published its plan in November 2019, following extensive consultation with employers and stakeholders.

Each RSP have begun carrying out extensive research to develop the next three year Skills & Employment Plan 2022-2025, which will be published at the end of this year.



## 2. Governance & Membership

The North Wales RSP is integrated within regional structures and support the delivery of a shared North Wales skills and employability agenda for Welsh Government and broader North Wales Growth Vision.

The RSP has six sub-groups/networks that are part of its structure including:

**Employability Working Sub-Group** aims to provide co-ordination to improve the coherence, quality and cost-effectiveness of employability provision across the region.

**North Wales Kickstart Network** focuses on bringing together DWP approved Kickstart Gateway organisations who operate in North Wales to improve co-ordination, quality and outcomes of Kickstart provision in the region. Kickstart provision ended March 2022.

**Work-based Learning Provider Sub-group** aims to respond to challenges presented by employers through the RSP, to ensure skills provision and delivery meets the needs of employers within the region.

**Digital Skills Cluster Sub- Group** aims to develop a collaborative, coordinated and targeted approach to digital skills challenges so that the region has a clear vision and set of priorities.

**Public Sector Employer Cluster Sub-group** newly formed group in late 2021 which aims to develop a collaborative, coordinated and targeted approach to define public sector skills gaps and demand for apprenticeships in North Wales.

**Construction Sector Employer Cluster Sub-group** newly formed in March 2022 aims to develop a collaborative, coordinated and targeted approach to skills challenges so that the region has a clear vision that sets out priorities and can measure progress and success.



Niall Waller, Chair,  
Employability Working Group



Cath Morris-Roberts, Chair,  
Kickstart Gateway Network



Paul Bevan, Chair,  
Work-based Learning  
Provider Group



Pryderi Ap Rhisiart, Chair,  
Digital Skills Employer  
Cluster Sub-group



Heather Johnson, Chair,  
Public Sector Employer  
Cluster Sub-group



Alison Hourihane, Chair,  
Construction Employer  
Cluster Sub-group

# North Wales Regional Skills Partnership Structure

**Council for Economic Development**  
Provides advice to help inform economic and business policies in Wales



**Wales Employment and Skills Board**  
WESB serves as a forum for employers to provide strategic input and robust challenge to shape future employment and skills policy

**Welsh Apprenticeship Advisory Board**  
WAAB serves to provides the WESB with advice and recommendations on matter relating to the content of apprenticeship in Wales



**Uchelgais Gogledd Cymru**  
**Ambition North Wales**



**Employability Working Group**



**North Wales Kickstart Gateway Network**

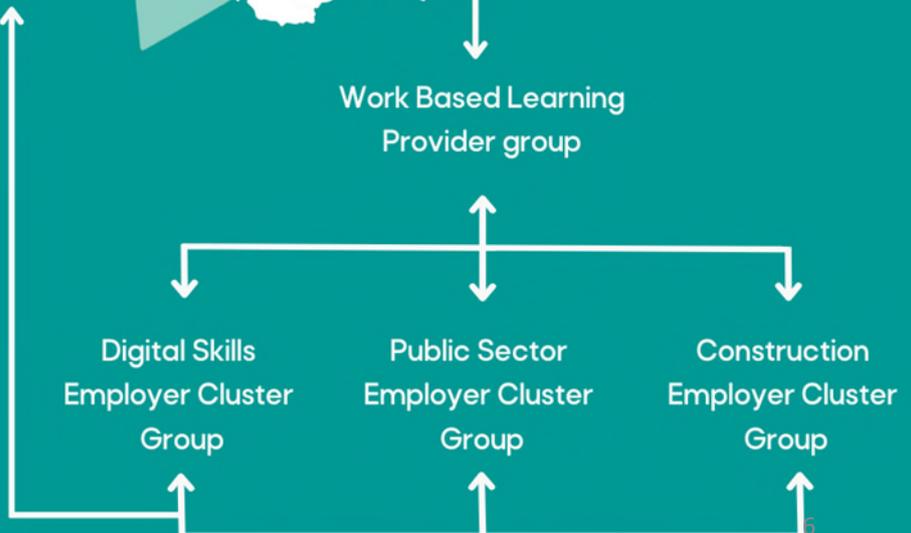
**Work Based Learning Provider group**



**Digital Skills Employer Cluster Group**

**Public Sector Employer Cluster Group**

**Construction Employer Cluster Group**



# Membership

An Industry member chairs the board, with membership drawn from a wide variety of stakeholders who attend as representatives of their industry sectors or networks. The North Wales RSP is also represented on the Wales Employment and Skills Board (WESB), Wales Apprenticeship Advisory Board (WAAB) and Council for Economic Development (CED).

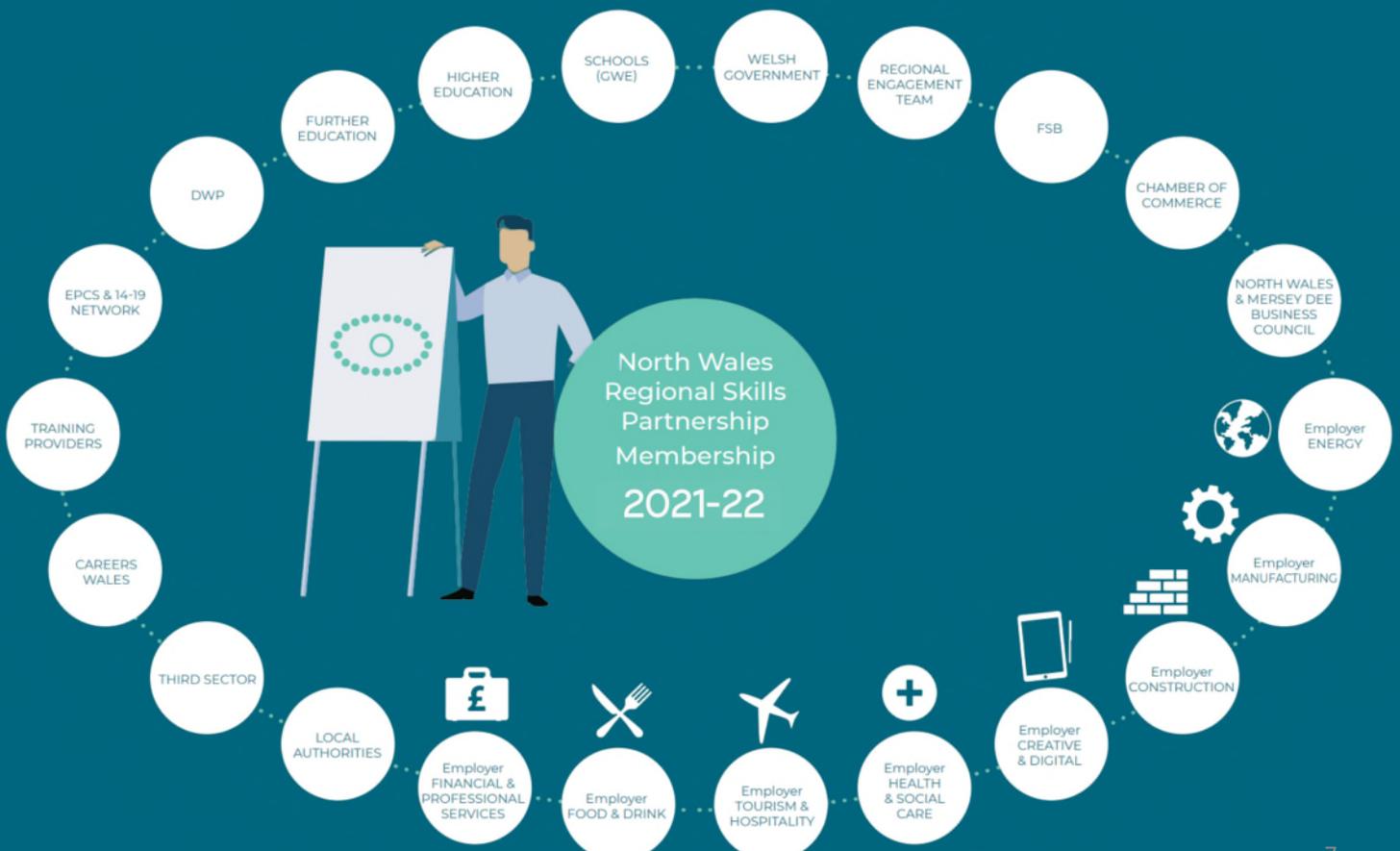
The membership includes a wide range of stakeholders including employers, education & training providers, Careers Wales, the Department for Work and Pension and the third sector. The RSP continues to promote its structure and membership with stakeholders across the region and nationally.

Over the last 12 months the focus has been on ensuring employer membership and input from our key and growth sectors. We have welcomed new members in the following sectors:

- Creative & Digital
- Energy
- Manufacturing

Moving forwards, we will focus on further strengthening our employer membership as we develop the next employment and skills plan.

Full details and information on the North Wales RSP Board Membership and Terms of Reference can be found online [www.rspnorth.wales](http://www.rspnorth.wales)



# 3. Our Regional Priorities

## PRIORITY

1

Building our future workforce and attracting talent

Underpinning our Skills and Employment Plan are **three overarching skills priorities** that are required to support sector growth in the economy. The priorities were drawn together by our extensive evidence base on regional needs, consultation feedback from a wide range of employers, providers and key stakeholders.

## PRIORITY

2

Skills development for an inclusive North Wales

Despite the continued challenges faced in the last year due to Covid-19, our priorities remain unchanged and have become even more important to ensure a skills led economic recovery in the region. We are still focused on providing support for our key and growth sectors in the region.

## PRIORITY

3

Promote career perception, pathways and apprenticeship opportunities

This year we have made progress by delivering on our action plan of activities for each of the three priorities.

## 4. Activities and Achievements

### *Our focus over 2021/2022:*

- Deliver on actions in our delivery plan for all 3 priorities with a particular focus on developing green economy and digitalisation
- Delivering brokerage support to assist both businesses and individuals in the region
- Help identify trends and changes in our labour market as a result of Covid-19 through our Covid-19 Labour Market Insight Reports
- Consult with programmes and projects across the region to understand the current offer / support available and to support Welsh Government in shaping the Young Person's Guarantee within the region
- Assist our education partners (FE, HE & WBL) with insights from employers on skills challenges and future skills needs, especially in light of Covid-19
- Establish two new employer cluster sub-groups, Public Sector and Construction
- Assist and support Welsh Government and FE partners with approving the Personal Learning Account Programme list which aims to support individuals earning under the median income of £29,534 as well as those whose jobs are at risk to re-skill and upskill to switch careers and progress in the workplace. Logistics/HGV driving, and green economies have been added to the list of available qualifications
- Campaigns and promotion of regional and national skills and employability programmes to ensure that our citizens and businesses are aware of the support available to them
- Sector specific campaigns to support certain sectors who are faced with recruitment challenges and promote career opportunities and pathway into the sector

# Highlights

- This year has undoubtedly been unprecedented, requiring rapid response to a fast changing situation. The North Wales RSP and related sub groups and partners have delivered on many activities and actions in relation to the skills and employability agenda in the region. Here are a few highlights:

## RSP 2021 - 2022

1. 3 COVID-19 LMI Reports produced to inform skills planning
2. MOU Trawsfynydd
3. Young Person's Guarantee Desktop Research and Report

## Priority 1

1. Published Green Skills Report
2. Established Public Sector and Construction Employer Cluster Groups
3. Young Person's Guarantee

## Priority 2

1. Tourism and Hospitality Social Media Campaign
2. Contributed to various Careers Wales events aimed at school pupils
3. Your Career, Your Future Event with Careers Wales and DWP

## Priority 3

1. Degree Apprenticeship Employer focused discussions
2. Apprenticeship Week Campaign
3. Re-focused WBL Provider Group and appointed a new Chair

# Our focus during 2021/2022:

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# 5. Assessment and Progress

## Priority 1: Building our Future Workforce

The speed at which COVID-19 has impacted the economy and labour market has been unprecedented. This time last year, most of us hoped that we'd be in a greater period of economic recovery by now. But, it's fair to say that the business world is still in flux, with post Brexit changes, supply chain disruptions and more recently the rise in energy prices.

Labour and skills shortages remain a substantial challenge across the region. Following easing of restrictions over the summer, the economy is in the grip of a strong hiring recovery with a large increase in the number of vacancies. However, there are growing concerns around a mismatch between skills demand for vacancies and the skillset of those searching for new jobs. This has affected most sectors, but most noticeably, Hospitality and Tourism, Social Care, Food and Farming, Construction and Logistics, which have all faced immense challenges.

The availability of a skilled and motivated workforce, which can adapt to meet current and future business needs is the cornerstone of our Strategy and therefore fundamental to our ability to improve productivity across North Wales. Brexit, technological advances in artificial intelligence and big data, increasingly fluid work patterns, and the demands of an ageing society; all have the potential to impact on the skills agenda in the years to come. That is why we have remained agile in our response. To that end, with our partners we have reviewed and delivered on the actions in our Skills & Employment Strategy to ensure its continued relevance and alignment.



# What did we do?

- **Young Person's Guarantee:** We have been commissioned by Welsh Government to support them by commencing in engagement activity to shape the Guarantee's provision within the region. This work is ongoing, and we are in the process of consulting with programmes and projects across the region to better understand the current landscape of offer/support available through current education, employment, training and wellbeing support/provision for young people locally and regionally. This exercise will highlight any regional gaps in provision/support available to young people including the gaps created through various project closures including ESF. This exercise will also help to identify the regional priorities for the future. We will be holding engagement events with Stakeholders & Employers over the coming months.
- **MOU Trawsfynydd:** To promote and support the development of a skills pipeline for nuclear decommissioning, we have agreed to work collaboratively with Magnox Ltd and Grwp Llandrillo Menai to support this ambition. This collaborative working arrangement will aim to deliver a range of proposed benefits for the region that will include, a clear skills pipeline to help skills/training providers and the supply chain effectively plan for future skills requirements for the next 5-10yrs and a fit for purpose world class workforce that can help meet the mission to safely deal with the nuclear legacy in the region (and wider afield).
- **Labour Market Information (LMI):** Throughout 2021-22, we have strengthened our analytical capability and embarked on an analytical deep dive to understand our changing landscape and the challenges and skills issues that are facing employers across our key and growth sectors. We have produced *three Covid-19 LMI reports* over the year. The purpose of the first two reports was to provide intelligence received from our employers to enables Welsh Government and other stakeholders to understand the employment and skills impact of COVID-19 in the region. The most recent report is based on research conducted for the two previous Covid-19 reports and the three reports conducted last year, outlining the impact of covid-19 on skills and employment across a two year period 2020-22.
- **National Occupational Standards:** Welsh Government tasked the RSP with utilising our employer networks to identify occupations that are a priority, emerging or declining in 2021. This intelligence then informs the new Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) and Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes and assists in the future prioritisation of National Occupational Standards.

# What did we do?

- **Skills pipeline for capital investments:** Discussion have continued within the Digital Connectivity Programme and the Energy Programme for the North Wales Growth Deal to ensure we have a skills and talent pipeline for jobs created in the region. This work will be ongoing over the next 12 months. Discussions have also taken place with other large-scale investments in the area such as Offshore Wind Alliance in anticipation of offshore wind developments off the coast of North Wales. Ensuring that young people are inspired and enthused in STEM subjects is key for the skills pipeline and we have worked with our partners, including STEM Gogledd and Careers Wales in schools.
- **Digital Skills:** We have developed an Action Plan in order to turn the strategies and goals identified through mapping the skills supply into actions. The Digital Skills Employer sub-group have been delivering on this plan for the past 12 months. We have worked with and supported the Digital Connectivity Programme to ensure skills is included and considered within the North Wales Digital Connectivity Strategy. We, jointly with M-Sparc and other partners arranged and delivered the Digital Skills Festival. The Digital Skills Festival was a regional event across a period of 1 week, bringing together workshops, tutorials and talks all designed to teach digital skills. There were events for everyone, from school children to teachers and was a very successful week.
- **Project Scoping for a North Wales Skills & Employability Portal and a Graduate Internship:** We have scoped the North Wales Skills & Employability Portal as a project, which is to develop an online platform improving the access to provision of support services available to employers and individuals, by providing streamlined access to key stakeholders to support them with their skills and employability needs. The project goal is to improve employer and individuals understanding and awareness of local jobs, apprenticeships, courses and labour market information.
- **Project Scope for Graduate Internship:** We have scoped a graduate internship project to support graduates into digital jobs and to match employers to graduates with the ability to undertake high level digital skilled projects with an aim of securing continued employment.
- **Worked with Qualification Wales – Advisory Board for Travel & Tourism Qualification:** The RSP worked as part of Qualification Wales Stakeholder Advisory Group to help feed into and shape the Travel, Tourism, Hospitality and Catering Sector Review in 2021/22. This has included ensuring that employers from the region could voice their opinion on the qualifications and shape future delivery.
- **Economic Recovery – Skills & Employability Prospectus :** The RSP worked with Ambition North Wales, the six local authorities, educational providers UK and Welsh Governments and private sector representatives to coordinate the regional response to economic recovery. People and Skills was identified as a key theme for the Recovery Prospectus that was presented to Welsh Government in November 2021. The prospectus outlined a series of policy changes and programmes that needed to be considered in the region targeting skills and employability.

# What did we do?

- **Published Green Skills Report:** We commissioned Data Cymru to produce a Green Skills Report and was published in March. The report has both a national and regional view. This report outlines the approach they have taken to understanding green jobs and skills, sets out the major publicly available data sources, and then assesses the green jobs and skills challenges within key sectors of the Welsh economy. There is additional work to be undertaken over the next 12 months to identify the full provision of green skills across the region in FE, HE and apprenticeships in order to identify in gaps in provision.
- **Established Public Sector Employer Cluster Group:** The overall aim of this group is to develop a collaborative, coordinated and targeted approach to define public sector skills gaps and demand for apprenticeships in North Wales to inform and influence our regional providers to respond with appropriate provision.
- **Established Construction Employer Cluster Group:** The overall aim of this group is to develop a collaborative, coordinated and targeted approach to skills challenges so that the region has a clear vision that sets out priorities and can measure progress and success and to inform and influence our regional providers to respond with appropriate provision.
- **Reviewed and approved a list of PLA qualifications:** The National list of PLA courses were reviewed and approved. Welsh Government have slightly changed the process of approving the PLA course moving forwards whereby colleges are to send future bids for new courses and qualifications to Welsh Government in the first instance, and Welsh Government will then send to RSP for endorsement/comment.
- **Continued working in collaboration with Creative North Wales:** As a member of the group, we have continued to support the sector over the past year. In response to a focus on this sector in a recent RSP Board meeting, we are working with Creative North Wales to create a series of films for young people, showing the range of careers available in the Creative Industries. This work continues, and the final films will be available for Welsh Government to use.
- **Pob Cam Social Media Campaign:** The Social Media campaign 'Pob Cam' highlighted that no matter which path an individual chooses to take in education or in their career, there is no wrong path, and they can still be successful if they don't follow the traditional route. We wanted to promote that progression in education and career is not limited by age, and it's ok to change their mind! This campaign was very successful and many individuals across all of Wales engaged with the campaign by sharing their career pathways to success including some well-known people within the TV and music industry, Elin Fflur.

# Case Study 1: Pob Cam

The North Wales Regional Skills Partnership hosted a social media campaign called 'Pob Cam', which means 'every step' in Welsh. Our aim was to prove that no matter which path you choose to take in your education or your career, there is no wrong path.

Although this was the first time undergoing a campaign of this nature, the response received was overwhelming. It was incredibly encouraging to see how many individuals were willing to share an insight into their working lives regardless of how long or short their careers have been.



A collection of images from individuals who took part in the campaign to share their stories, including some famous faces, such as Elin Fflur and Owain Tudur Jones

Sharing a range of stories from all backgrounds, the campaign was filled with celebrations of successful careers and inspiring stories from our partners including Department of Work and Pensions, Federation of Small Businesses and M-Sparc. We also had engagement from 'Heno' presenters Owain Jones and Elin Fflur.

The stories that were shared have shown that no career is linear, with the biggest career changes coming because of seizing opportunities and pushing oneself out of their comfort zone. The 'Pob Cam' campaign was a great opportunity to bring together these stories with an aim to normalise changing their career or returning to education at any age.

A notable story came from Sarah Schofield who started her journey in the world of work 'selling donuts' to later become the Director of 'Adra'. Sarah's journey shows that no matter where you start your journey, it doesn't determine the end career, if the opportunity is considered to learn and grow from the experiences gained.

It was great to see so many individuals come together to advocate for embracing their career paths, especially as our economy recovers post-COVID, it felt fitting to be able to reflect on the careers so far through the 'Pob Cam' campaign.

After a successful week of hearing so many inspirational stories, we received some positive feedback, praising the importance of sharing our work history to remind individuals that there is no wrong path and every step counts for our future. We hope we've managed to inspire individuals who are unsure of the path they want to take. Let's hope we can bring back the campaign again next year with the aim to be bigger and better!

# Case Study 2: Digital Skills Festival

Skills and careers organisations in North Wales held a weeklong Digital Skills Festival in November to demonstrate how important Digital will be for the future, with each session upskilling, teaching, and informing the audience.

The Regional Skills Partnership, in collaboration with M-SParc, Careers Wales, FE and HE partners, STEM Gogledd as well as other key stakeholders, held the North Wales Digital Skills Festival aimed at primary and secondary school children, college and university students, parents and educators.

A variety of both online and face-to-face events and workshops took place over the week including sessions on coding, web design, hackathons, CAD/CAM, careers advice and more, with events taking place across north Wales.

One event that took place in M-SParc welcomed over 250 participants, reaching people from as young as eight years old all the way up to postgraduate students, providing excellent, engaging workshops educating in the fields of coding, CAD/CAM, UX/UI Design, Software Development.

Aston Martin F1 Team, Technocamps, STEM Cymru and many more supported the event through delivering sessions inspiring and informing individuals on digital and careers within the digital space.

The Regional Skills Partnership is tasked with stepping up to the challenge of developing local digital skills through the Digital Skills Employer Cluster Group. This group brings together local employers who are key in helping to identify current and future skills gaps across the region in high value IT, digital and tech jobs. The group is a platform for employers to voice concerns and issues with the aim to make the most of their knowledge and experience across a wide range of industries and to find innovative solutions to inform future provision to aid new generational talent.

We look forward to seeing the impact of the Growth Deal projects in the region, which will deliver significant capital spend in North Wales, developing incredible infrastructure across a wide range of sectors and areas that are crucial to the growth of the region. Jobs within digital is required across the majority of projects within the portfolio and the Digital Skills Festival was just one of many steps that are being taken across the region to ensure that the current and future workforce is informed and inspired about digital, digital skills and career opportunities in digital.

*"Digital connectivity is critical to the success of the North Wales Economic Ambition Growth Vision. An ambitious programme of major infrastructure improvements is currently being developed to address digital inequalities and create the conditions in which businesses can grow, innovate and become competitive. But infrastructure alone does not deliver benefits to society and it is vital that our communities, businesses and workforce are equipped with the skills that are required to exploit the potential. The North Wales Digital Programmes Board welcomes the collaboration with the Regional Skills Partnership to address the skills challenges in its Digital Connectivity Strategy."*

Sioned Williams, SRO Digital Connectivity Programme

*"One of the key aims of Creative North Wales is to act as a bridge between education and the creative sector here in North Wales and to create pathways so that our young people have opportunities to work and develop skills in one of Wales' key industries. Working with the Regional Skills Partnership has enabled us to create and deploy structures that highlight the needs of employers and the ability of educators to respond to demand."*

Garffild Lloyd Lewis, Chair of Creative North Wales (2017-2022)

*"The RSP has been key in developing a collaborative, coordinated and targeted approach to define the current and future public sector skill gaps, with a particular focus on apprenticeships. Catherine and the team have, for the first time, given Public Sector a voice! As one of the largest employers in the region this is very welcome across the sector. We are already seeing results, with stronger relationship with providers and a developing network between employers. We have more to do but this is a great start"*

Heather Johnson, Chair of North Wales Public Sector Employer Cluster Group



*"I am looking forward to getting started and delighted to be the first Chairperson for this group. This is a fantastic opportunity for employers in North Wales, who work in the industry, to discuss challenges with skills gaps and work together to solve these issues and tackle them for the future. As an industry, we must promote opportunities for the future generation, challenging and changing the stereotypes of construction."*

Alison Hourihane, Chair of North Wales Construction Employer Cluster Group



*"The Digital Employers Group of the RSP has driven some important regional projects and changes in the last 12 months. It's a cauldron of opinions and a positive forum for change in Digital Skills in North Wales."*

Pryderi Ap Rhisiart, Chair of North Wales Digital Skills Employer Cluster Group



# Priority 2: Skills Development for an Inclusive North Wales

- Priority 2 actions have been mainly led by our Employability Working Sub-Group. Working in Partnership, the group recognise the need to enhance the employability and labour market prospects for our most disadvantaged residents by targeting support services around core skills, vocational and job readiness training, work experience, job-search assistance, and career guidance.
- During the last 12 months, the focus has been on the following key actions:
- Co-ordinate support that helps people in to work and encourage collaboration and alignment between providers
- Make finding help and support as straightforward as possible
- Provide more co-ordinated engagement with employers
- Understanding employability landscape post ESF project closure
- In the last 12 months, we have seen the levels of claimant counts increasing across the region, as well as redundancies being made as a result of challenges posed by Covid-19. However, we have seen the number of universal credit claimants levelling off towards the end of 2021. The labour market has had a shift to being very much an employee market resulting in some sectors such as health and social care, tourism and hospitality, food and drink manufacturing and others finding recruitment and retention particularly challenging.
- In what is a challenging and changing jobs market, businesses in the region recognise the need to support young people looking for jobs and generally, the support from employers wanting to participate in Kickstart has been high in the region. The RSP have continued to work closely with DWP and Kickstart Gateway providers during the year to ensure a co-ordinated approach and emphasising regional economic priorities.



# What did we do?

- **Tourism & Hospitality Social Media Campaign:** We worked in collaboration with partners, DWP, Working Wales, Local Authorities, Colleges and North Wales Tourism to deliver a 5-day social media campaign to promote career opportunities within the tourism & hospitality sector in North Wales.
- **Kickstart Social Media Campaign:** In collaboration with DWP and North Wales Kickstart gateways we delivered a social media campaign to promote Kickstart opportunities within the region. The campaign was an opportunity to share success stories of individuals who have previously engaged with or was currently on a Kickstart programme. There was a strong focus on showcasing progression routes into employment and apprenticeships. This was achieved through sharing case studies, film clips and through sharing short quotes from individual's currently on programme.
- **Your Career Your Future Event:** In partnership with Working Wales and DWP we delivered a regional virtual careers fair aimed at all individuals. Local employers across our key and growth sectors were invited to participated in the event to share a sector overview and career opportunities which included Jobs, Apprenticeships, Education and Training and Employment support. Several Partners and stakeholders as well as employers were able to exhibit their offer on the platform as part of the event.
- **Contributed to various Stakeholder events aimed at school pupils:** We have been involved in several sector specific virtual Careers Wales events aimed at inspiring and informing school pupils about career opportunities and regional labour market intelligence.
- **International Women Day Social Media Campaign:** On the 8th of March the World celebrated International Women's Day, a day to mark the political, social, cultural and economic achievement of women. To mark the occasion, in collaboration with Ambition North Wales we shared several inspirational stories through our social media channels. We also celebrated the appointment of our construction employer cluster group chair, Alison Hourihane.



*“The RSP plays a vital role in bringing together the employability providers from across North Wales to ensure that support for our collective clients is co-ordinated and effective. Together, we can spot the gaps and overlaps and work to address them. With a tight labour market in North Wales, we can’t afford to leave people excluded and the RSP will help to build the partnerships and strategy needed.”*

Niall Waller, Chair of Employability Working Group

*“Careers Wales was delighted to work in collaboration with North Wales Regional Skills Partnership and Department for Work and Pensions to deliver the “Your Career, Your Future” event. We were thrilled with the amount of interest shown with more than 70 exhibitors from North Wales and 400 attendees taking part in the virtual event.*

*It was great to not only offer job seekers access to information and guidance about employment, but also give local employers the opportunity to promote their industry, as well as live vacancies, at a time when face-to-face support in large events was limited due to the pandemic.”*

Nikki Lawrence, Chief Executive of Careers Wales



# Case Study 3: North Wales Tourism & Hospitality Social Media Campaign

In July, in response to the urgent recruitment support required by the Hospitality and Tourism sector the Regional Skills Partnership worked in collaboration with partners, DWP, Working Wales, Local Authorities, Colleges and North Wales Tourism to deliver a 5 day social media campaign.

The campaign was to promote career opportunities within the tourism & hospitality sector in North Wales. Whether that be job vacancies, Apprenticeships, KickStart, other training opportunities, relevant courses or events that could support opportunities within this sector in the region. The campaign also aimed to promote the message that there are long term career opportunities within this sector.

There were several ways that partners participated, such as sharing case studies, quotes and film clips through their own social media channels as well engagement with partner content through their social media channels. DWP held daily spotlight hours through Twitter with a focus on opportunities and jobs available within each of the local authority areas, across the duration of the campaign.

The campaign was a huge success with a high amount of activity shared by all involved through their social media channels which resulted in an increase in engagement by individuals considering a career within the sector.

“It’s really pleasing to establish such a strong and valuable relationship between North Wales Tourism and the RSP. The highlight surely has been the tourism and hospitality social media campaign that was arranged and delivered back in July.

This highlighted the response to the urgent recruitment support required by the Hospitality and Tourism sector the Regional Skills Partnership worked in collaboration with partners, DWP, Working Wales, Local Authorities, Colleges and North Wales Tourism to deliver a 5 day social media campaign. Promoting the message that there are long term career opportunities within this sector.



We know the campaign was a huge success and we look forward to continue the support in partnership for the greater good of our sector.”

Jim Jones, CEO of North Wales Tourism

# Priority 3: Promoting Career Perceptions, Pathways and Apprenticeship Opportunities

The perceptions of sectors, lack of understanding about different learner routes and apprenticeship opportunities is a key priority for our RSP. The Provider Sub-Group which includes all work-based learning providers in the region have taken actions forward in this field of work over the last year and more recently re-focused the group to deliver on the following areas:

- Share Practice, data, and trends to inform the RSP and support influencing of Welsh Government and other stakeholders
- Responding to regional drivers and economic trends identified by the RSP
- Support the promotion of apprenticeships as a pathway amongst individuals and key stakeholders

We want to raise awareness amongst both learners and employers of the varied skills opportunities and pathways available locally to better equip our workforce to respond to changing employer requirements. Moving forwards the group will focus on achieving the following actions:

- Continue to inform the RSP of provision and planning data to support the RSP with influencing of Welsh Government and other key stakeholders
- Consider the implications of the introduction of the new curriculum for Wales on take up of apprenticeships in the region
- Monitor and respond to the skills demand of the North Wales Growth Deal and other significant Projects in the region, maximising opportunities for WBL
- Respond to skills gaps and challenges raised by employers through the RSP
- Support any demand-led increases in Higher Level (L3+) apprenticeships, including Degree Apprenticeships
- Monitor and respond to opportunities for Shared Apprenticeships and Supported Shared Apprenticeships



# What did we do?

- **Data Sharing:** Systematic data sharing system established last year relating to WBL regionally was also maintained this year. We also continue to see data sharing from providers regarding the number of WBL learners choosing Welsh medium learning options and discussions with Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to ensure no adverse effects of Covid-19 on Welsh medium learners and choices.
- **Re-focused WBL Provider Group and appointed a new Chair:** An appointment of the new Chair, Paul Bevan was made towards the end of 2021. The group has since been re-focused to respond to challenges presented by employers through the RSP in terms of post 16 regional work-based learning provision and delivery in the region. The Group will focus on the strategic direction of travel for current and future work-based learning provision and delivery within the region, working on a short-term action plan to achieve its purpose and aims.
- **Apprenticeship Week Campaign:**

Apprenticeship Week was celebrated across the region through our provider partners. We shared our own employer and apprentice case studies as well as the sharing of partner posts through our social media channels to highlight the benefits of apprenticeships to individuals, employers and the wider economy.

- **Degree Apprenticeship Employer focused discussion:** We facilitated a degree apprenticeship focused discussion between HE providers in North Wales including, Bangor University, Wrexham Glyndwr University and Open University. The discussion was produced and publicised on Business News Wales. The discussion focused on the degree apprenticeship routes available in the region and the benefits to employers. Cath also took part in an audio discussion as part of this campaign, promoting the benefits of recruiting an apprentice.



# Case Study 4: Degree Apprenticeships – Training the Next Generation

As a follow-on to the successful virtual degree apprenticeship webinar that took place in November 2020, it was recognised by the Regional Skills Partnership, as well as employers of the RSP Digital Skills Employer Cluster Group that there was a need for another event of this kind prior to the autumn intake of new degree apprentices.

The Regional Skills Partnership in collaboration with Bangor University, Glyndwr University and the Open University took part in a recorded discussion that was broadcasted on Business News Wales on the 16<sup>th</sup> August. They discussed the benefits of degree apprenticeships to employers and the offer in North Wales.

*It was a great pleasure to be able to takeover the chair of the Work-Based Learning Provider group and to build upon the group's work by focusing on growing the number and awareness of apprenticeships across North Wales. In particular, the group has been engaging with the changes in skills required to meet the challenges of the future - whether as a result the tight labour market or the need for new and evolving green skills. Through the group providers have worked together to ensure that a broad range of options are available to employers and apprentices in the region, working with Welsh Government and other stakeholders to grow work-based opportunities through new pathways and shared apprenticeship schemes"*

Paul Bevan, Chair of Work Based Learning Provider Group

The pandemic has increased the profile of apprenticeships across the board as well as reenergised appetite amongst employers to upskill, reskill and invest in their future workforce.

Apprenticeship opportunities are an essential part of our economic recovery and there is a need to make greater collaborative efforts to raise awareness of the opportunities available to employers through funded degree apprenticeship programmes.

Apprenticeships have a vital role in supporting the recovery of the economy and in supporting those most likely to be negatively impacted as a result of COVID-19.

Investment in upskilling and reskilling existing staff will be vital to ensure that businesses have the necessary capability and skills in their workforce to recover and transform their business, to adapt to changing markets and implement new business models.

Apprenticeships can help to offer employers a way to strengthen their business further and to access quality training to help build a pipeline of skilled, motivated talent. The Apprenticeship Programme will continue to help employers during recovery, as Wales' primary driver for upskilling the workforce.

The offer of degree apprenticeships by Higher Education institutions is one of the lesser known and untapped resource used by employers across Wales who are working to drive higher level skills and help companies attract, recruit or retrain talented people through the Degree Apprenticeship programme.

Companies across North Wales are being encouraged to work with Universities and Colleges to bring learning into their workplace to either upskill their current workforce or take new talent on board. According to a recent report commissioned by The Open University:

- Most organisations surveyed in Wales (71%) struggled to find workers with the right skills over the past 12 months;
- Business leaders across Wales have spent £51 million on temporary staff in the last year;
- Welsh organisations have spent over £51 million on temporary staffing to bridge skills gaps over the last year, despite one in four (25%) making redundancies to cut costs in the wake of COVID-19;
- 71 per cent of organisations reporting difficulty finding candidates with the relevant skills, Welsh business leaders have turned to more expensive solutions and had to invest in recruitment (69%) to fill urgent talent shortages;
- When it comes to hiring, 30 per cent of Welsh employers are expecting to require more managers over the next 12 months to navigate further challenges;
- Across the board, expenditure on plugging Welsh skills gaps has swelled by 42 per cent over the last year. And looking ahead, while 42 per cent organisations in Wales plan to bring back furloughed staff after the government scheme ends, more than one in four (27%) will rely on hiring in temporary workers to fill in the gap left, while another 15 per cent plan to invest in automation to cut costs further;

Degree apprenticeships in Wales include an integrated bachelor's degree qualification as part of the requirement of an apprenticeship framework and provide opportunities:

- For individuals in Wales to complete a programme of learning and training resulting in them gaining an apprenticeship and degree level qualification demonstrating the relevant knowledge, skills and behaviours that employers in Wales recognise and value;
- To strengthen pathways from higher level apprenticeships into degree level qualifications;
- To further meet the skill needs of Wales and improve innovation and productivity through the skilling and upskilling of new and existing employees in Wales;
- To break low skills trap, where a low supply of skills is combined with a low demand for skills;
- To improve the diversity of the workforce in digital and engineering and advanced manufacturing sectors in Wales;
- To increase collaboration across education sectors in Wales and reduce nugatory competition.



*Working with the RSP in North Wales has been great,*

*they understand the challenges that employers face and the impact degree apprenticeships can have in Wales. Working collaboratively in the region to promote the degree apprenticeship to employers is a good approach. Continuing to work in this way will increase further awareness of degree apprenticeships as a quality, achievable and work-based solution to grow talent in the region. The RSP team are always open to ideas and supporting us as HE apprenticeship providers in the region.*

Rhys Griffiths - Business Relationship Manager (Wales), Open University

# 6. COVID Recovery Plan

## Our approach to skills and employment recovery

The pandemic has had a major impact on individuals and households, and on students, workers and communities. For younger adults, the challenges are especially acute; new graduates are struggling to find job opportunities while businesses may have less immediate capacity and inclination to take on apprentices and other school leavers.

Older workers are also being forced to reconsider their assumptions about work. Many will need to seek new and different jobs, and to apply their skills in new ways for different employers - all of which signals upheaval, anxiety and uncertainty. Within this context, lower skilled adults are especially vulnerable.

Our employers and businesses across all sectors have been affected. The extent to which they have the confidence to recruit and invest in their staff (through re-training) is critical to unlocking recovery.

Employers across a number of sectors have lost their workforce and continue to lose their workforce due to competitive salary prices elsewhere within the region, other parts of Wales and across the border. The working from home flexibility enables individuals to look for work further

afield. Recruitment is also challenging and with some businesses is a barrier to growth.

In seeking to accelerate economic recovery, our people matter hugely. We need to respond effectively. We need to match people with job opportunities, equip them with the skills to thrive in the future, and give employers the confidence to recruit and use those skills well.

The RSP and partner have put together a recovery plan, which includes financial and non- financial 'asks' in the short, medium and long term. The following challenges have been identified:

- **Young People (under 25 years old)** adversely affected by the pandemic; Increase in NEETs figures;
- **Adults (Over 25 years old):** End of furlough, rising redundancies and unemployment and the need to retrain and routes to better employment; Further away from the labour market and long term unemployed will experience more barriers; Deploy people from one sector into another.
- **Respond to Future skills needs:** Need for digital skills, leadership & management skills and transferrable skills, entrepreneurship growth in green recovery

# COVID Recovery Plan

Many of the specific actions and interventions identified within our skills recovery action plan are already underway, particularly those actions relating to supporting economic recovery in the short term. In many cases we have been able to make early progress by building on existing, successful Partnerships with our partners FE, training providers, DWP and Careers Wales.

The Young Person's Guarantee will ensure there is no 'lost generation' in Wales as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It aims to provide everyone under the age of 25, living in Wales, with support to gain a place in education or training, and help to get into work or become self-employed.

The guarantee brings together a range of programmes and initiatives which have been designed to provide the right support at the right time for the diverse needs of young people across Wales.

The Welsh Government is asking businesses across Wales to commit to the Young Person's Guarantee and help make it a success by offering opportunities for young people to gain experience or take their first steps into the world of work through work experience placements, work tasters, apprenticeships or employment.

Since the onset of the pandemic, partners have mobilised quickly to provide a comprehensive range of ongoing support for employer and individuals across the region, and these continue to evolve in response to the changing economic situation.

# 7. Next 12 Months – What will we do in 2022-2023?

The actions set out in our Skills & Employment Plan and the Covid-19 Recovery Plan align strongly with the areas Welsh Government is targeting to ensure that skills provides a core pillar of recovery. In what has been another challenging year for employers and education providers alike, as a partnership we will continue to focus on the recovery plan and how we can assist with ensuring that skills gaps and challenges are met.

We will also:

- Continue to ensure close alignment between North Wales Skills & Employment Strategy and emerging changes in the economy.
- We will continue to provide a detailed analysis of North Wales' labour and skills market, enabling our skills and education provision to meet or continue to meet the current and future skills needs of local business and residents.
- Continue to gather intelligence that will encourage partners to develop strategies that increase emphasis on stimulating employer demand for higher level skills, enabling providers and partners to introduce/flex/respond with the appropriate provision needed.
- Deliver on our skills recovery plan for the region.
- Work with the North Wales Growth Deal to map skills needs across programmes and further develop and re-purpose the skills and employability programme in the area.
- Support our key and growth sectors skills needs, with particular emphasis on developing a green economy and the transition to Net Zero as well as digitalisation.
- Develop our next 3 year plan 2022-25:
- We have been asked by Welsh Government to produce a new set of Employment and Skills Plans covering the next three years. The plan will identify the key skills and employment priorities for the region, aligned to the regional economic plans, including the North Wales Growth Deal. There will be focus on key areas:
  - Employability:** We will focus on ensuring there is support provision for accessing jobs and helping to align the young Person's Guarantee to programmes that help unemployed people and adults to move into work. Specifically, RSPs have a central role to help Welsh Government deliver on the vision for a Fairer, Stronger, Greener Wales, in relation to the 5 key areas of action:
    - Young people realising their potential
    - Tackling economic inequality
    - Championing Fair Work for all
    - Supporting people with a long-term health condition to work
    - Nurturing a learning for life culture

# Next 12 Months – What will we do in 2022-2023?

**Digital skills:** We have a clear role to play to help deliver in relation to employability and skills. We will work with employers and stakeholders to collate labour market intelligence which will help inform decision making centred around digital skills. Digital skills in digital employers, alongside cross-sectoral digital skills requirements, are especially important to the region's recovery and growth. This covers the spectrum of basic digital skills which are transferable between multiple sectors, to more specific digital sector skills such as analytics, cyber security, games and animation, networking and cloud infrastructure and programming and software development. The competition for high level digital skills is in demand by tech specialist employers now, alongside cross-sectoral digital skills requirements. New technology and skills are continuously disrupting and challenging the traditional skill set of workers across the globe. There are many challenges for region not only to keep apace, but also to aspire to be at the forefront of these developments for recovery and growth.

**Net zero skills:** Building on the Green Skills Report and through further research, we

will identify key regional sectors of the economy that will be impacted by the transition to Net Zero. There will be a need to identify specific occupations that are or will be undergoing change and an analysis of how the Welsh workforce undergoing that change will have to adapt, develop new skillsets or re-adapt their skills. We have a critical role to play, working with our employer networks to directly identify the range of technologies and skills required.

**Further education and apprenticeships:** As a partnership, we will identify through robust evidence the regional priorities for Further Education and Apprenticeship delivery, drawing from employer led sources. Evidence will include sectors impacted by Brexit and/or Covid-19 as well as sectors with a need to attract talent and specific skill sets into the region, due to a planned or existing inward investment project.

**Welsh language:** We will build on the work of previous employment and skills plans in identifying the need for Welsh language skills.

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