

Update on the Review of Digital Innovation

Context

In March 2018 the Welsh Government announced that Professor Phil Brown, Cardiff University School of Social Sciences, was to lead a review into the implications of digital innovation on the economy and the future of work in Wales¹. Since that time, Professor Brown has been working with a specially convened Expert Panel² to explore some of the challenges and opportunities posed by the digital innovation, both within Wales and internationally.

This paper aims to provide a short update on the current position of the review and any recent developments. Professor Brown will be attending the meeting to provide further insight on the review.

Call for Evidence and further consultation work

Following the request at the October Council meeting, the deadline for the Call for Evidence was extended to the 30 November 2018. This gave respondents an additional month to consider their input. Despite the extended deadline and the promotional efforts of Ministers, social partners and Expert Panel members, the Call for Evidence attracted just 27 responses. This has highlighted to Professor Brown the need for his review to take the conversation to stakeholders and to construct more sophisticated, and targeted, methods of engagement.

In response, support has been put in place to run alongside the review to further aid Professor Brown in his engagement activity. Part of this work includes the release of a short online video with Professor Brown summarising his interim findings to camera. This will be supported by an update report which will be published online. A summary of the Call for Evidence responses is currently being compiled and will also be published online once completed.

These actions mark the next phase of the review as Professor Brown looks to consult more widely on a series of thematic areas drawn from his initial research and engagement work, including the input received through the Call for Evidence.

Next steps and future work streams

Further work is needed to understand how some of Professor Brown's interim findings can be adapted for Wales and in scoping the action needed to build the capacity and capability of government, delivery partners, businesses and the workforce in pursuit of a model for Wales 4.0.

¹ See <https://gov.wales/newsroom/businessandconomy/2018/180316-economy-secretary-announces-digital-innovation-review/?lang=en>

² See <https://beta.gov.wales/review-digital-innovation-economy-and-future-work-wales>

Below is a summary of the various work streams Professor Brown is currently seeking to explore in more detail during the final phase of his review. These are continually evolving as further engagement takes place with stakeholders. They can currently be summarised as:

- strategic aims and ambitions for Wales 4.0, e.g. from coal mining to data mining: scoping what a new value proposition for Wales looks like linked to individual well-being and a shared prosperity;
- using data analytics and Artificial Intelligence to fuel economic transformation (and better and more dynamic labour market information);
- initiatives to enhance industrial transformation linked to job re-design working with social partners to develop regional business support models and employee re-skilling and conversion programmes;
- reimagining lifelong learning in Wales and the action needed to progress the education and skills system from old industries to new skills and the support needed to empower the next generation to navigate work-life;
- national digital strategy on smart infrastructure, including state of the art connectivity and mainstreaming digital at the heart of the foundation economy (linking with the National Infrastructure Commission for Wales);
- Wales and the World: re-branding the nation as Wales 4.0 to attract attention and investment, linked to challenger funds – potentially administrated through the Development Bank for Wales – aimed at business and research innovation;
- developing ‘flexicurity models’ to motivate and maintain society to be digitally active, enabled and contributing (linking with the Fair Work Commission);
- mobilising public sector to become mainstream innovators in service design and delivery (linking with the report into transforming public services through better use of digital³); and,
- leadership and capacity building for Wales 4.0 in Welsh government and beyond.

Extension to reporting timescales

In order to explore the above areas to sufficient depth, and reflecting the difficulties in publishing his interim findings, Professor Brown has requested that his reporting timelines be extended to June 2019. Ministers have agreed to this extension and the Minister for Economy and Transport has already released a Written Statement summarising the decision.

³ See <http://www.leeforallanelli.wales/wp-content/uploads/systemreboot.pdf>