



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

East Wales European Social Fund Programme 2014-2020

2021 Annual Implementation Report Summary



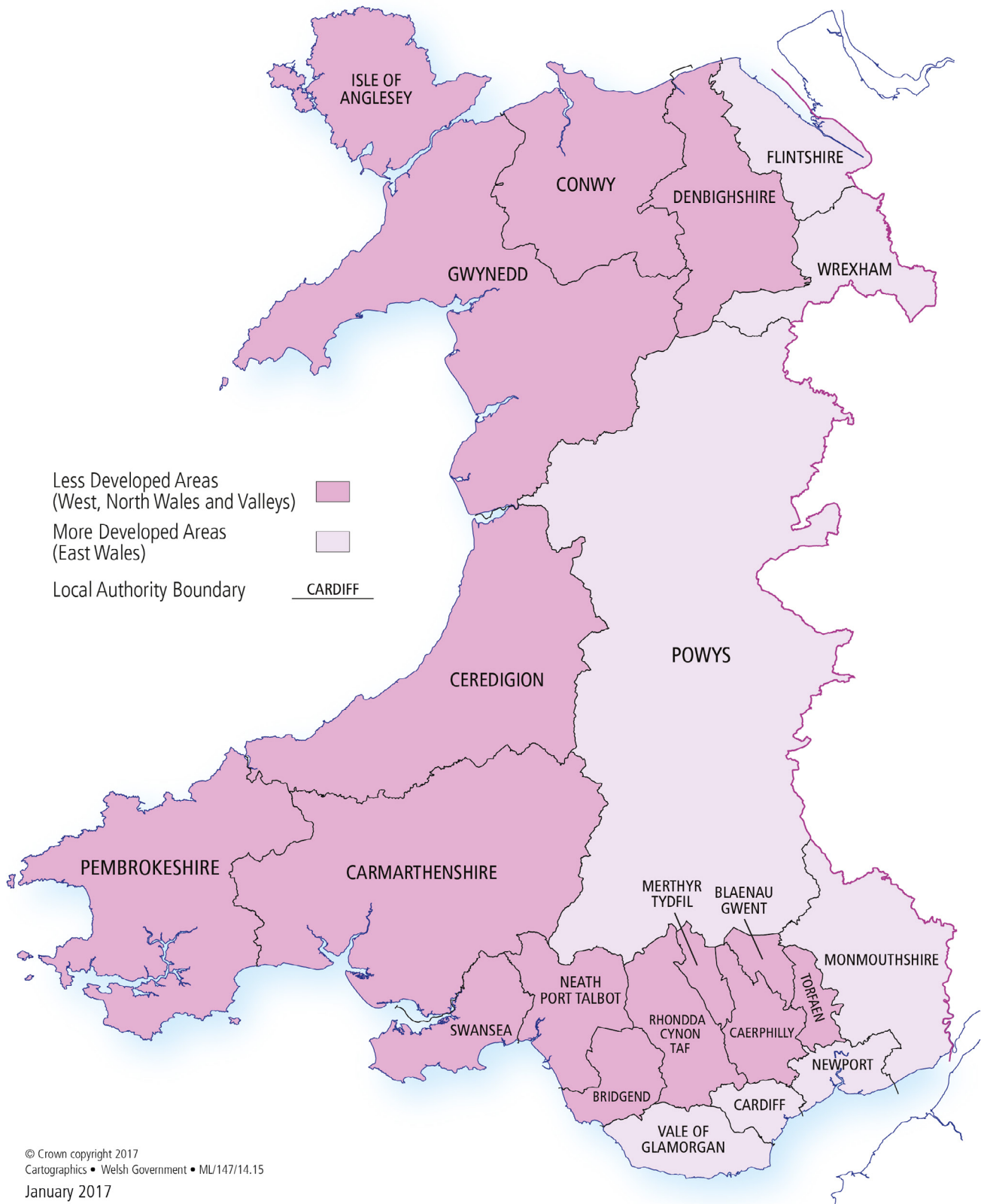
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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Cronfa Gymdeithasol Ewrop
European Social Fund

European Structural Fund Programme Regions in Wales for 2014-2020



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Introduction

Wales is benefiting from over €2bn of EU funds through four Structural Funds programmes covering the 2014-2020 period.

As part of this, over €203m has been allocated to more developed areas through the East Wales European Social Fund, which aims to drive economic growth by investing in the following priority areas:

Priority	EU budget	Total Budget
Tackling Poverty through Sustainable Employment	€25m	€50m
Skills for Growth	€74m	€154m
Youth Employment and Attainment	€54m	€108m
Public Services Reform and Regional Working	€5m	€11m
Containing Covid through Capacity	€41m	€82m
Technical Assistance	€4m	€8m
Total	€203m	€413m

Programme progress

Despite the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, implementation of this Programme continued to make progress and by the end of 2021, the Welsh Government had invested €175m of EU funds to 45 projects through the European Social Fund driving a total investment of €545m in East Wales. Key highlights include:

- Almost 7,500 people helped into work
- Almost 41,000 new qualifications achieved
- Over 2,500 people progressing into further learning or training

Tackling Poverty through Sustainable Employment

EU funds are supporting projects that are increasing the skills and employability of economically inactive and long-term unemployed people, and helping reduce underemployment and absence rates of employed people with work-limiting health conditions. As we are reaching the final stages of the programmes, whilst there have been no new approvals, a number of non-financial extensions to existing projects have been agreed ensuring the benefits of both the funding and those to citizens are maximised. Other highlights from 2021 include:

- In June, RCS (UK Research and Consultancy Services Ltd) published emerging results from an evaluation of the pan Wales Active Inclusion Fund (AIF) delivered by the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA). The AIF aims to reduce economic inactivity and unemployment by providing grants for voluntary organisations across Wales to help disadvantaged people get back into the labour market. The evaluation drew on the lifetime of the Fund and emerging findings stated the AIF had particular value in enabling highly tailored support to meet the needs of challenged individuals where such needs could not be wholly met by larger institutional approaches and highlighted the importance of the Third Sector's role in future employability programmes and policy.



WCVA AIF – Cardiff People First

Skills for Growth

EU funds are being invested in a range of initiatives that are improving basic, technical and high-level skills of working people across Wales. Highlights during 2021 include:

- In May, the Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarships (KESS II) scheme, which operates across Wales, reached a significant milestone of funding a total of 655 postgraduate research projects. The scheme encourages research collaboration with SMEs in key sectors of the Welsh economy including life sciences, advanced engineering and materials, low carbon energy, ICT and the digital economy.
- In September, the Welsh Contact Centre Forum launched the last cohort of their Welsh Financial Services Graduate scheme. The Graduate Programme is a £13.5m private sector led project backed by £6.4m EU funds with 23 of Wales' leading financial and professional services companies. The programme aims for graduates to accelerate their careers in financial services and develop them into professionals and succeed in a post-coronavirus world by the ability to adapt to ever-evolving workplaces and continuous updating and refreshing of their skills.

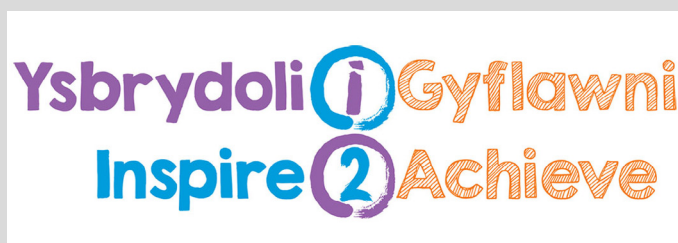


KESS II Award Winner

Youth Employment and Attainment

Young people across Wales are benefiting from EU funded training and employment opportunities, taking part in projects to increase the take-up and attainment of STEM subjects while EU funds are also being invested in increasing the skills of early years and childcare workers. Highlights in 2021 include:

- Newport City Council were awarded additional funds of £1.2m for Inspire2Achieve East Wales, aimed at reducing the number of 11-24 year olds at risk of becoming NEET. The additional funding will enable delivery to continue until the same end date as other partners.



Inspire2Achieve

Public services reform and regional working

EU funds are supporting projects to stimulate new regional solutions, planning and service models, helping organisations to innovate and work together on a regional basis to find new ways to tackle some of the challenges they are facing and improve the delivery of public services. Highlights in 2021 include:

- Over £900k EU funds have been awarded for the Mid Wales Regional Collaboration Office led by Ceredigion County Council. Supporting the Growing Mid Wales partnership, the office will establish a regional economic development hub utilising new tools and methods to enhance overall coordination and planning in the Mid Wales region.



Growing Mid Wales Regional Collaboration Office

Success stories

Skills@Work

Run by Newport City Council in partnership with Cardiff Council and Monmouthshire County Council, Skills@Work supported by nearly £2m EU funds provides of people in the workforce with no or low skills access to learning in a variety of formal, non-formal and informal settings across South East Wales.

The project offers support with for literacy, numeracy, digital literacy and confidence building, advice on job searching, interview skills and one-to-one mentoring. It also provides a range of accredited, classroom based and online job specific or bespoke courses.

Matt, from Monmouthshire, had been unhappy with his previous job working for a fast-food outlet for some time. Working long, difficult hours and with no job satisfaction he was looking for new options. After being referred to the Skills@Work project, they were able to find a Construction course that he wanted to do.

Matt said:

“Skills@Work helped me with my online Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) course by lending a laptop to me. As a result, I completed my course and scored 100%! Employment & Skills even offered to buy me PPE, which I couldn’t believe! So here we are, a few days later, I am fully ready to go and I start my new job later this week! Thanks again guys, your support has meant a lot!”



Skills@Work

BioInnovation Wales East Wales

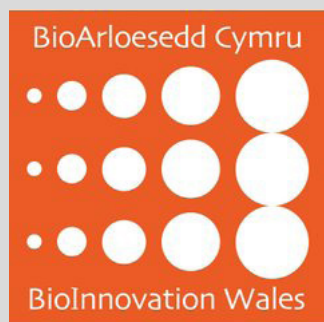
Wanting to branch out after 20 years as a livestock vet in Powys and always having had an interest in research, Kate Hovers enrolled on several BioInnovation Wales courses, returning to academic work for the first time in nearly 30 years.

Led by Aberystwyth University in partnership with Swansea University, BioInnovation Wales, backed by £1.2m EU funds, provides online Postgraduate training for people working in the Welsh Agri-Food and Biotech Industries.

Kate’s initial concerns about distance learning around her broadband speed proved unfounded and from enrolling on a Behaviour Change course which she found particularly useful, Kate was inspired to enrol on more course and she is now on her 5th module and also has applied to do an MRes (Research Masters).

The flexible format of the online courses means she can study when she wants to and has allowed Kate to fit her learning around job, with the techniques she’s learnt from the modules also proving useful in her other roles, including training other sheep vets and engaging with Welsh Government on hill farm policy.

Kate said, “It’s good to keep your brain active as you get older. The learning support is good but not intrusive. Completing an assignment is really satisfying, It is an undertaking, so you need to find time and commit to learning but it’s flexible enough to be achievable. It has given me renewed enthusiasm for the rest of my work.”



BioInnovation Wales



BioInnovation Wales - Kate Hovers