



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014 – 2020:

2019 Annual Report - Summary

1. Overview

The Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme (WGRC-RDP) 2014-2020 is a 7 year investment Programme funded by the Welsh Government and the European Union ('EU') through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development ('EAFRD'). The Wales RDP was adopted on the 26 May 2015 and has been amended three times, most recently in October 2019.

The Wales-wide Programme supports a wide range of activities designed to increase the sustainability and resilience of Wales' natural environment, land-based sector, food businesses and rural communities.

A budget of up to €977 million has been agreed for the Rural Development Programme. This is made up of approximately €652 million of EU money and €326 million of the Welsh Government's own money.

The majority of activities supported through the Programme are delivered through 'schemes' and can be broadly grouped by the following themes;

	EU Budget	Total Budget	EU Spend	Total Spend
Human and Social Capital Schemes (including Farming Connect support)	€ 166.98	€ 277.28	€ 41.11	€ 65.85
Investment Schemes (such as the Sustainable Production Grant)	€ 93.41	€ 142.43	€ 42.29	€ 64.23
Agri Environment-Climate Schemes (Glastir)	€ 311.27	€ 419.67	€ 185.66	€ 247.25
Local Development Schemes (including LEADER)	€ 54.12	€ 89.28	€ 20.12	€ 31.22
Other Activity (such as Wales Rural Network)	€ 25.80	€ 48.69	€ 8.95	€ 16.88
Total available under the Programme	€ 651.59	€ 977.35	€ 298.12	€ 425.44

Each scheme delivered within the Rural Development Programme is allocated a budget. Targets are set for what is expected to be delivered. These targets are monitored throughout the year by the Welsh Government. Progress towards the targets is included in the annual report sent to the European Commission (EC). This monitoring ensures that money is being spent in the way which Welsh Government planned. A copy of these reports can be found [here](#).

2. Evaluation

Evaluation is key part of the Programme to help assess the effectiveness of the Programme and identify areas where improvements can be made. A number of [guidance documents](#) have been published to support this work.

In 2019 the Welsh Government commissioned an external evaluator to review progress of the RDP against a set number of European-wide common evaluation questions. This work was undertaken by a consortium led by AGRA CEAS supported by ADAS UK and Wavehill. The findings of this work can be found in the 2018 Annual Implementation Report available [here](#).

Other research and evaluation work completed in 2019 includes:

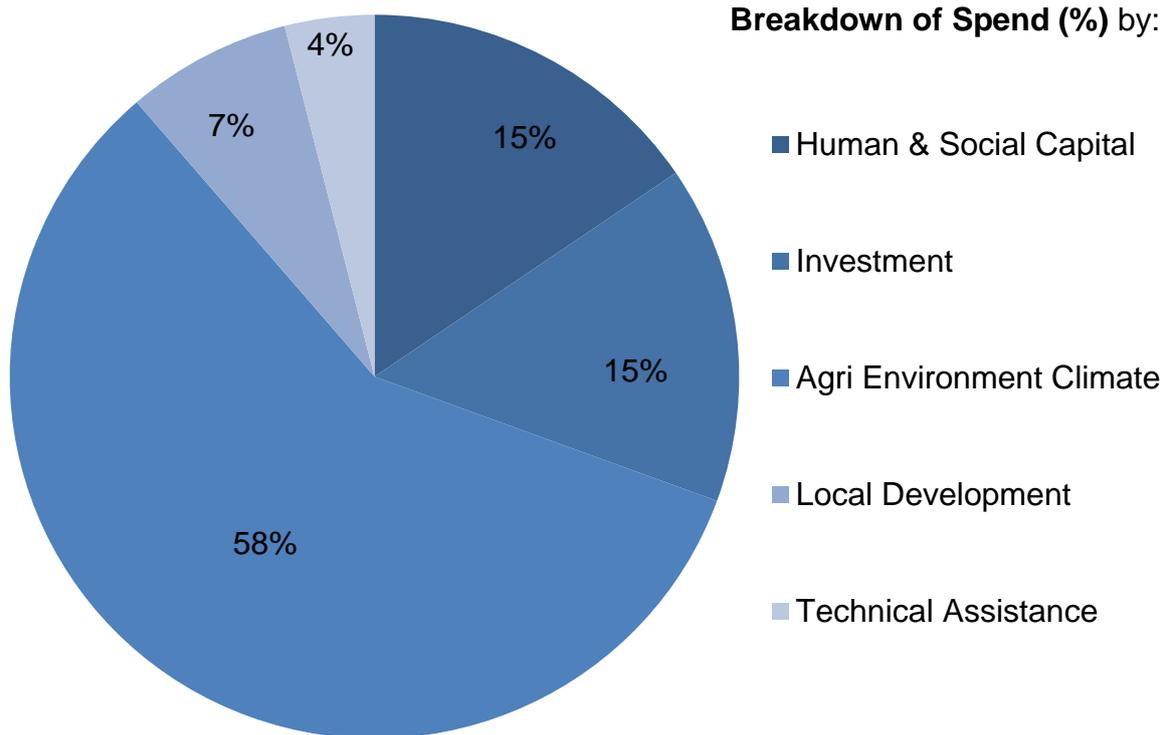
- The first phase of the Farming Connect evaluation was completed, the corresponding report can be found [here](#).
- A [review](#) of the Food Business Investment Scheme
- The Refugees Employment and Skills Support [Study](#)

3. Programme Progress

Since late 2015 a total of €425 million has been paid out under the Programme, with €132 million paid during 2019 alone. The majority of the funding (€247 million) paid relates to land-based (agri-environment / forestry) activities. €298 million of the total paid since the beginning of the programme has come from European funds, of which €166 million comes from Pillar I transfer funding.

By the end of 2019 some of the key achievements delivered through the Programme included:

- a total of 14,406 participants had received training;
- 4,236 beneficiaries received specialist advice;
- there has been almost 1,572 hectares of new woodland created;
- total of 2,969 holdings received investment support through the Sustainable Production Grant and Farm Business Grant;
- 5,279 contracts under agri-environment-climate were supported in 2018, covering a physical area of 826,911 hectares;
- 3,410 hectares supported through the Glastir Woodland Management along with 1,070 hectares of woodland restocked through the Glastir Woodland Restoration Scheme
- 27 projects funded through the European Innovation Partnership



Further information on the individual schemes delivered through the Programme can be found below and by following the web-links for each scheme.

4. Human & Social Capital Schemes

Training and advice delivery contracts (Knowledge Transfer and Rural Business Advisory Scheme) are delivered through [Farming Connect](#). Farming Connect is central in supporting the delivery of other areas of the Programme. It forms the main mechanism for delivering an integrated package of knowledge transfer, advice and innovation support targeting rural communities within Wales.

Click [here](#) for an example of a demonstration farm project that explores the use of digestate as an alternative to compound fertilisers.. Another initiative under Farming Connect, Venture, is designed to help match farmers and landowners who are looking to step back from the industry with new entrants looking for a way into farming. An example of a new joint trading Venture agreement in West Wales can be seen [here](#). Farming Connect recognise that spending time visiting other businesses can be a valuable way to discover improved methods of working, to see best practice in action and bring home new ideas, an [example](#) of a study visit as part of the Farming connect Management Exchange programme includes a visit to France, England and Austria.

Advisory services to aid Glastir delivery are also supported, along with other Knowledge Transfer and Information Scheme activities. These include grant-aided projects for sectorial and industry led, bottom-up initiatives targeting agriculture, forestry, food, other rural SMEs and land managers.

[EIP Wales](#) is the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity & Sustainability, which aims to bring a range of people and organisations together to develop innovative solutions, benefitting the wider industry in Wales and the EU. EIP is a new approach to support the development of research and innovation in agriculture and woodlands in Wales. In Wales, EIP was launched in January 2016 and applications were, and continue to be, invited from Groups interested in solving common problems. In August 2017, Menter a Busnes were awarded the contract to run the EIP Wales programme which involves the management and facilitation of every stage from enquiry through to awarding project contracts and execution of the successful project. Eight EIP projects were approved in 2019, bringing the total to 27. Approved projects can be found on the [Farming Connect website](#).



The [Cooperation & Supply Chain Development](#) ('C&SCD') scheme supports collaboration and is designed to make new things happen. The scheme aims to achieve transformational change, supporting the development of new products, practices, processes and technologies in the agriculture, forestry and food sectors. To date the C&SCD has led to 43 cooperation operations being supported.

Financial support is offered through the [Sustainable Management Scheme](#) ('SMS') to help start up and facilitate new collaborations through to landscape-scale ambition, coordinating actions and input from several parties to achieve lasting benefits across our communities. It supports a range of activities to improve the management of natural resources and in so doing contribute to the well-being of rural communities. An example of this is the [Coetir Anian project, also known as Cambrian Wildwood](#). There have been five application windows for this Scheme resulting in 30 approved projects with a further 13 in appraisal. To support delivery of the Scheme the Sustainable Management Scheme support service provides eligible groups with a facilitator, who can provide support for

groups to develop their ideas and to submit their Expression of Interest. Information on the support service can be found [here](#).

The Welsh Government opened the [Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being](#) ('ENRaW') grant Scheme which is designed to support businesses, organisations and communities to work together under the umbrella of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act to increase their resilience. ENRaW predominantly support projects that make improvements in residential areas by delivering benefits for people, businesses and their communities. It focuses on pilot and demonstration projects at the right scale; promoting cooperation and collaboration. During 2019 there was one application window which resulted in 20 expressions of interest, of which five were invited to progress to full application.

There have been two windows for initial applications of the [Co-operative Forest Planning](#) ('CFP') scheme, resulting in two projects receiving funding. This scheme provides financial support to encourage planning for the creation of broadleaved and conifer woodland, to improve the management of natural resources and contribute to the well-being of rural communities within Wales.

There are several Tourism related support schemes available through the Programme. Under cooperation element of the Programme the Regional Tourism Network and Marketing Support scheme is delivered by Visit Wales (VW) and was launched in 2017. The principal aim of the Scheme is to increase the profitability and resilience of the individual SME businesses engaged. This scheme consists of two separate projects; the [Regional Tourism Engagement Fund](#) (RTEF) and the [Tourism Product Innovation Fund](#) (TPIF). The RTEF is aimed at regional destination development while TPIF is aimed at working with private sector partnerships and networks to develop new innovative tourism products. There are 43 approved projects supported through these projects. Examples of the projects funded through TPIF can be found [here](#) and those funded under RTEF [here](#).

5. Investment Schemes

The [Sustainable Production Grant](#) ('SPG') is a capital investment fund to help improve both the economic and environmental performance of farms. Grants represent a maximum 40% contribution. By the end of 2019 a total of 82 applications had been approved. The [Farm Business Grant](#) ('FBG') provides a financial contribution towards capital investment in equipment and machinery that have been pre-identified as offering clear and quantifiable benefits to farm enterprises. Farming business must have attended a Farming Connect 'Farming for the Future' event to be eligible to apply for the Scheme. Over 3,860 applications have been approved through six rounds of FBG by the end of 2019.

The [Timber Business Investment Scheme](#) ('TBIS') provides funding for capital investments that add value to forests by enabling woodland management activities, timber harvesting and/or timber processing. By the close of 2019 there had been four application windows for TBIS resulting in 45 approved projects.

The [Food Business Investment Scheme](#) ('FBIS') is designed to help primary producers of agricultural products in Wales to add value to their outputs. The scheme provides support to those businesses that do first and/or second stage processing activities. A total of 88 FBIS applications were approved by the end of 2019. Complementing other food and drink related interventions within the Programme, the [Rural Business Investment Scheme - Food](#) ('RBISF') is a capital investments scheme to support projects that offer clear and quantifiable benefits to the food and drink industry in Wales. This Scheme provides support for those food and drink processing or manufacturing activities currently not eligible under the Food Business Investment Scheme. There have been seven application windows under RBISF, resulting in 24 approved projects by the end of 2019.

The [Micro Small Business Fund](#) ('MSBF') delivered by Visit Wales is available for micro to small size businesses with fewer than 50 FTE employees. MSBF is an investment fund targeting eligible capital investment projects in the tourism sector in Wales. It can be used either to upgrade existing or create new high quality product. To date 41 projects have been approved for funding. Some examples of the investments funded through the MSBF can be seen [here](#), as well as a [video](#) highlighting some of the work funded under the scheme.



6. Agri Environment Schemes

[GLASTIR](#) is a family of related schemes in Wales to support sustainable land management. Glastir is designed to deliver outcomes at a farm, forest and landscape level in a cost effective way. It pays for the delivery of specific environmental goods and services aimed at combating climate change, improving water management, maintaining and enhancing biodiversity. Glastir is administered

by the Welsh Government with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) supporting the delivery of some elements of the scheme.

The **Glastir Advanced** Scheme delivers targeted financial support to farmers and land managers to deliver these objectives, delivering environmental improvements for a range of objectives including habitats, species, soil and water. This Scheme is now closed to new contracts. Under the **Glastir Small Grants Scheme** land managers and farming businesses can benefit from maximum funding of up to £7,500 for capital works under three themes; Carbon, Water and Landscape & Pollinators. There have been six applications windows to date resulting in over 6300 approved operations.

Glastir Woodland Creation ('GWC') supports land managers who wish to create new woodland and/or manage existing woodlands. The **Glastir Woodland Restoration** ('GWR') scheme has been developed to enable woodlands infected by *Phytophthora ramorum* to be replanted to help slow down the spread of the disease, providing the opportunity to diversify tree species to increase resilience to climate change and pests / diseases. In addition to support for woodland creation and management the **Glastir Restoration Scheme** provides support for the re-stocking of larch woodlands that been infected or threatened by the fungal pathogen *Phytophthora ramorum*. The **Forest Monitoring & Risk Management Scheme** is delivered by Natural Resources Wales supporting monitoring, mitigation and prevention of harmful results from current tree and woodland environment pest or disease outbreaks. A list of Glastir application windows and dates can be found [here](#).



7. Local Development Schemes

LEADER is a form of Community-Led Local Development ('CLLD'). There are 18 Local Action Groups ('LAGs') in Wales covering eligible wards in 21 Local Authority areas. Each Local Action Group has developed a Local Development Strategy ('LDS') that sets out the opportunities and challenges in their area and explains what actions they intend to take to exploit the opportunities and manage some of the challenges.

For information on your Local Action Groups and for copies of the supporting Local Development Strategy for each area please visit the Wales Rural Network ('WRN') [pages](#). You can also find examples of LEADER projects through the [interactive map](#) on the WRN webpage along with contact details for each of the Local Action Groups in Wales.

The grants offered through the [Rural Community Development Fund](#) ('RCDF') provided investment funding for a wide range of activities to help meet local needs and strengthen communities so that they can grow and thrive. Since the start of the programme there have been seven funding windows resulting in 142 approved applications. There are no further application windows for RCDF planned.

The [Tourism Amenity Investment Support Scheme](#) ('TAIS') is delivered by Visit Wales, complementing the other tourism support offered through the Programme. The scheme provides support for small-scale investment to improve signposting of tourism sites, construct and modernise tourism information centres and provide visitor information and guidance. It is operated through an annual call to develop accessible small scale tourism infrastructure at the destination level. There have been two application windows of TAIS supporting 47 projects and a list of projects can be seen [here](#).



8. Wales Rural Network

An essential part of the Programme is the Wales Rural Network ('WRN'). The WRN supports networking and the engagement of stakeholders, share information, best practice and experience across Wales, UK and Europe. The Network makes a significant contribution to the Programme by helping to add value to the funding available, publicising activity funded through the Programme.

The role of the Network has evolved over the course of the Programme to provide greater emphasis on promotion of funding received and the sharing of best practice. A new website was launched towards the end of 2018 with an interactive map showing LEADER projects, highlighting the successes of the Programme and the benefits for people in Wales' rural areas. In 2019 this interactive map was expanded to show all RDP supported projects.

Social media also plays an important part in the communications strategy for the Programme with a presence on both Facebook and Twitter:

<https://twitter.com/WalesRuralNet> and <https://www.facebook.com/walesruralnet>

More information on the work of the Wales Rural Network can be found at:

<https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/>



8. Further Information

More information on the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme (WGRC-RDP) 2014-2020 can be found at:

<http://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/farmingandcountryside/cap/ruraldevelopment/wales-rural-development-programme-2014-2020/?lang=en>



**Cronfa Amaethyddol Ewrop ar
gyfer Datblygu Gwledig:**
Ewrop yn Buddsoddi mewn Ardaloedd Gwledig
**European Agricultural Fund for
Rural Development:**
Europe Investing in Rural Areas



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