



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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

2022 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 five times, the last was adopted by the EC on 26 January 2022. The proposal prioritised support for the extension to the Glastir Agri-Environment suite of measures and the extension of the Farming Connect contract.

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 €977.31 million has been agreed for the Rural Development Programme. This is made up of approximately €651.6 million of EU money and €325.7million 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)	€ 142.31	€ 247.08	€ 112.62	€ 190.24
Investment Schemes (such as the Sustainable Production Grant)	€ 83.58	€ 133.92	€ 67.25	€ 105.54
Agri Environment-Climate Schemes (Glastir)	€ 356.87	€ 479.21	€ 305.69	€ 392.52
Local Development Schemes (including LEADER)	€ 46.17	€ 74.35	€ 40.46	€ 64.87
Other Activity (such as Wales Rural Network)	€ 22.66	€ 42.75	€ 18.24	€ 34.41
Total available under the Programme	€ 651.59	€ 977.31	€ 544.26	€ 787.59

Each scheme delivered within the Rural Development Programme is allocated an indicative 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.

The Strategy team commissioned a mid-term evaluation of the **Knowledge Transfer, Innovation and Advisory Services Scheme, known otherwise as Farming Connect** in 2018. This involved two phases of fieldwork and the full report was published in March 2021.

Farming Connect went through a scheme refresh, with several new interventions introduced from 2019. The Strategy team therefore commissioned a final evaluation of the scheme in 2022, focused on assessing impact and value for money for the programme period, as well as evaluating the implementation and delivery during the refresh period.

A mixed methods approach has been employed. A desk-based review will include a systematic analysis of available documentation, a review of the Theory of Change developed during the mid-term evaluation, analysis of baseline beneficiary survey data and benchmarking data, and a review of communications. Interviews/workshops will be held with beneficiaries, members of the Strategic Advisor and Delivery Boards, Welsh Government policy officials, scheme leads, and members of the delivery team. An online survey will provide sectoral perspectives on the services offered. A series of intervention-specific focus groups will take place and case studies will be developed.

Fieldwork will start in February 2023 and the final report will be delivered in December 2023.

The **evaluation of the Sustainable Management Scheme (SMS)** was awarded in late 2019 and incorporated annual reporting milestones. In order to assess the environmental outcomes of the scheme, this evaluation uses secondary data analysis of project level monitoring and evaluation activity. The evaluation makes use of the environmental data captured by the Environment and Rural Affairs Monitoring and Modelling Programme (ERAMMP). The evaluation employs a mixed methods approach including longitudinal case studies of projects, surveys of actors involved in collaboration, and interviews with stakeholders.

This first phase of fieldwork provided insights into the processes of SMS. The second phase of fieldwork in 2021 involved stakeholder interviews, project interviews and case study interviews and a web survey. The first interim report was published in November 2021 which provided a process and Theory of Change evaluation of the scheme.

A second draft annual report was delivered in June 2022 which included a survey of project leads. The response rate to this survey was below the target required to be able to

make robust inferences from the data. The Strategy team worked with the contractors to modify the evaluation methodology for the survey element, in order to increase both the response rate and the diversity of respondents (to include project partners and staff). Due to delays associated with the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the evaluation contract was extended to June 2023 assess the outcomes and impacts of projects that have been delayed.

The final phase of fieldwork commenced in November 2022 and has involved interviews with a representative sample of beneficiaries (considering funding window and geographical location) and stakeholders focused on outcomes and impacts and case studies with projects. A modified online survey which utilised a snowball approach was launched in November 2022. A presentation of findings is scheduled for early Spring 2023, with the final evaluation report to follow shortly after.

The procurement of an evaluation of **the tourism schemes offered through the RDP** (Micro Small Business Fund - measure 6.4, the Tourism Amenity Investment Scheme - measure 7.5, and the Regional Tourism Engagement Fund and the Tourism Product Innovation Fund - both measure 16.3) was delayed due to Covid-19 and the impact on the tourism sector specifically. The specification was revised, and a smaller-scale evaluation was commissioned in Spring 2022 comprising a mixed method approach. In September-October 2022 scoping interviews with Welsh Government officials and desk-based research were conducted, involving an analysis of relevant policy, scheme and strategic documents and tourism and visitor data. A Theory of Change co-production workshop was held with stakeholders in November 2022, the output of which was a Theory of Change report.

Other research and evaluation work undertaken in 2022 includes:

- Procurement of an evaluation of the **Food schemes offered through the RDP** (Food Business Investment Scheme (FBIS) - Priority 3 (focus area a) - Measure 4.2; Rural Business Investment Scheme - Food (RBISF) - Priority 6 (focus area a), Measure 6.4; Project Helix, Cywain and Food Skills Cymru - Measure 1.1) was awarded in December 2021. An inception meeting was held in January 2022 and entered the scoping stage in February 2022
- An evaluation of the **Timber Business Investment Scheme (TBIS)** was commissioned in October 2021. A Theory of Change Co-Production Workshop took place in 2022, with an extended scoping/inception period during Summer 2022 due to the summer being a more ideal time to survey forestry businesses. Two online surveys, one for beneficiaries, another for unsuccessful applicants was launched during the Autumn with stakeholder and delivery team interviews taking place during November-December 2022. A presentation of findings was scheduled for January 2023 with the final report delivered in February 2023, to be published in the Spring of 2023.
- The final report of the LEADER evaluation was delivered in Autumn 2022, to be published in January 2023.

- The evaluation of the **European Innovation Partnership (EIP)** was awarded in February 2021. Initial fieldwork started in December 2021. A presentation of findings from the interim stages of the fieldwork took place in May 2022. A midterm report was delivered in November 2022 (to be published in January 2023) and a presentation of final findings and the final report are due to be delivered in Spring 2023.
- An evaluation of activities undertaken as part of the Co-operation and Supply Chain Development Scheme, specifically under measures 16.2, 16.4 and 16.8 was commissioned in August 2022. The first meta-review was conducted in November 2022 and the second is scheduled for March 2023.
- Evaluations that are currently under preparation include
 - Glastir evaluation
 - Ex-post scoping exercise
 - Ex post evaluation.

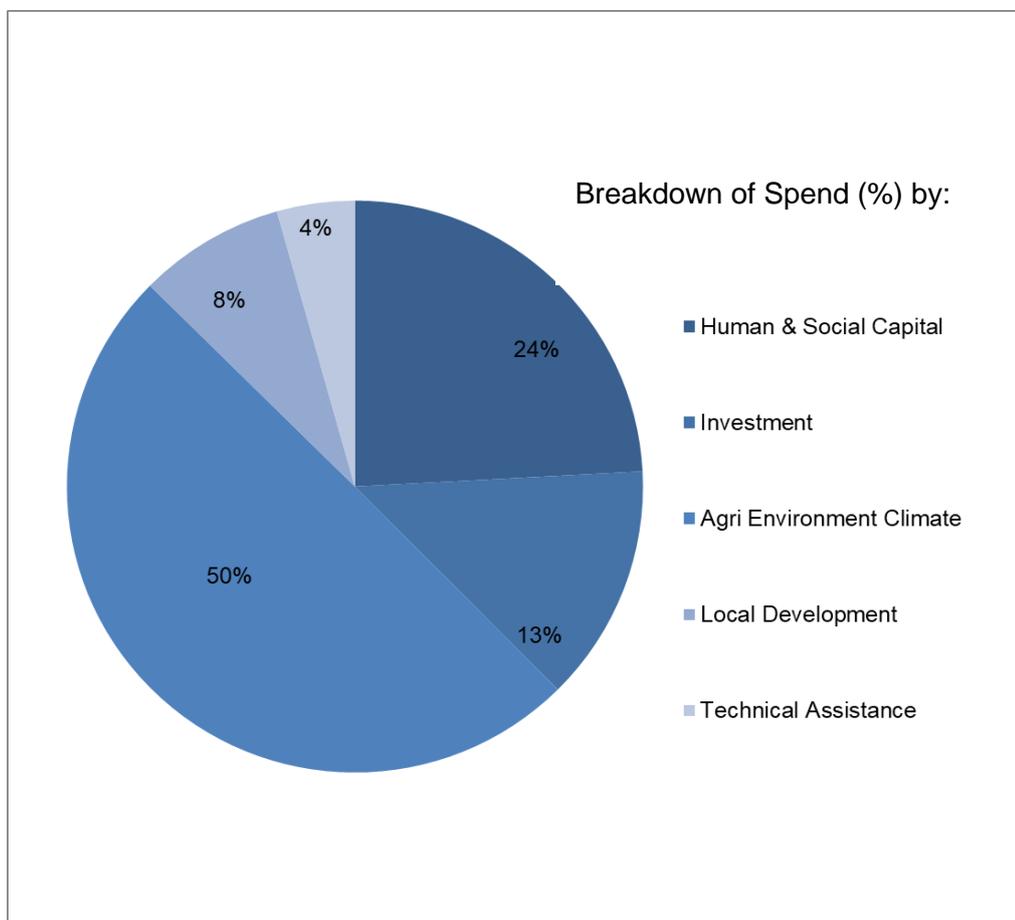
All published research and evaluation reports can be found on the [Wales Rural Network website](#).

3. Programme Progress

Since late 2015 a total of €787.6 million has been paid out under the Programme, with €136 million paid during 2022 alone. The majority of the funding (€392.5 million) paid relates to land-based (agri-environment / forestry) activities. €544.3 million of the total paid since the beginning of the programme has come from European funds, of which €273.8 million comes from Pillar I transfer funding.

By the end of 2022 some of the key achievements delivered through the Programme included:

- A total of 98,396 participants received training, across a total of 61,625 training days.
- There has been 2,227.07 ha of new woodland created.
- A total of 7,610 holdings received investment support through the SPG and FBG.
- 656,050 people have benefited from improved services, infrastructures, and IT infrastructures.
- 4,610ha supported through Glastir Woodland Management, along with 1,203ha of woodland restocked through the Glastir Woodland Restoration Scheme.
- 46 projects were 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.

Up until 31 December 2022, the Farming Connect Demonstration Network has supported 30 Demonstration farms and has recruited 214 Focus sites. The sites promote innovation and new technology that is available for farmers and foresters and provides a practical platform to demonstrate how this new technology/technique can be implemented at farm/forestry level.

Up until 31 December 2022, 947 events have been hosted on the demonstration network with 14,088 attendees.

Click [here](#) for an example of a demonstration farm project.

An herbal ley incorporating fewer species has been found to perform better than a more diverse seed mix with 17 plant varieties, during a trial on a Farming Connect demonstration site. Aled and Dylan Jones and their father, Emyr, have been growing multi-species leys rich in legumes and herbs to fatten lambs from their 1500-ewe flock at Fferm Rhiwaedog, Bala.

This trial is following the pattern seen in other Farming Connect multi-species ley trials - the simpler the mix, the better it performs, Mrs Duller told farmers attending a recent Farming Connect open day at the farm. “Essentially the very diverse leys haven’t seemed to persist well in the wetter climates with heavier textured soils as we observed at Moor Farm in Pembrokeshire, a previous Farming Connect demonstration site, and in the EIP project looking at the impact of herbal leys on the health and performance of grazing lambs.

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. The initiative guides people on both sides through the key steps required to find a potential business partner. An integrated package of training, mentoring, specialist advice and business support equips participants with the skills, knowledge and confidence needed to help them achieve their goals.

Up until 31 December 2022, there were 353 active members and out of these 28 potential matches have been identified. The individuals who have found potential business partners are now applying for group advice through the advisory service for further support.

There have been 62 new joint venture enterprises established since the start of the Programme.

Farming Connect recognises how beneficial independent, confidential and bespoke advice can be. Through the Farming Connect Advisory Service, subsidised advice can be delivered both one to one and on a group basis.

The Advisory Service is delivered by eight “lead” companies, selected and approved by Farming Connect.

Up until 31st December 2021 28,598 instances of 1:1 and Group advice have been completed and claimed.

The Farming Connect programme is a large programme with wide delivery platform delivering several interventions under numerous themes to all sectors of the industry. All the published Farming Connect case studies can be found on the following webpage:

<https://businesswales.gov.wales/farmingconnect/news-and-events/case-studies>

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.

A total of 46 projects have received EIP Wales funding, meeting the contract target. Within the 46 projects, there were 265 Group Members, comprising of 229 farmer members, 11 SME, 11 NGO's, 14 Research Institutes, and other members from the agricultural and forestry sector. 40 of the project groups accessed support of an Innovation Broker. Approved projects can be found on the [Farming Connect website](#).

Six dairy farmers who are members of the Calon Wen Milk Co-operative undertook a 3-year project to see if some simple interventions could boost pollinator numbers on their

farms. Their organic farms already provided suitable habitats for bumblebees and other pollinators, but they still wanted to see if more could be done by working closely with the Bumblebee Conservation Trust and RSPB. The project boosted bumblebee numbers dramatically with little impact on the productivity of the fields. The Group also created some useful resources for other farmers who are interested in improving areas of their farms to provide good habitat for pollinating insects. More information on this project, can be found [here](#).



Six beef and sheep farmers from across Wales have trialled the use of GPS tracking collars to help manage their sheep and cattle grazing on mountains and conservation land. In both 2020 and 2021, the farmers tested the collars on three grazing environments during their primary grazing season. The ability to locate cattle and sheep across different extensive environments was of significant benefit to the participants. This project also helped demonstrate that livestock tracking can allow for improved control of ecosystem services, resulting in a better understanding of how to improve the ecosystem service offer associated with upland and fenland management, using technology.

Up to 31st December 2022, 43 projects have been completed, with a full report on each project published on the Farming Connect Website. The remaining three projects will be complete by the end of March 2023. Each end report includes project aims, methodology, findings and conclusions. A critical element of the EIP Wales programme is the dissemination of project findings to participants and Farming Connect registered businesses and further afield.

An independent evaluation of the programme implementation and impact within Wales commenced in 2021, with the final report being published in spring 2023. The evaluation

will review the engagement and application process, and effectiveness of project dissemination.

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 378 cooperation operations being supported. -

Supported under measure 16.4, **Cywain** –is a supply chain collaboration model that will provide targeted support to micro and SME businesses operating in the Welsh food and drink sector.

The aim is to:

- Help your business to be more competitive, sustainable, and innovative.
- Create and strengthen links between your business and the supply chain.
- Support your business' development and growth.
- Maximise the opportunities for your business to grow profitably, potentially helping you to create jobs.
- Give you access to tools, mentors and resources that will help you to scale up your business.
- Maintain and strengthen Wales' reputation for producing high quality food and drink.
- Provision of a food and drink producers map - [#SupportLocalSupportWales - For you, for them, for Wales - Cywain \(menterabusnes.cymru\)](#).

Over its lifetime, the project has engaged 254 stakeholders, with 55 holdings participating in its activities, and created 40 jobs.

Financial support is offered through the [Sustainable Management Scheme](#) ('SMS') to help start up and facilitate new collaborations through to landscape-scale ambition, co-ordinating 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.

There are 50 projects across Wales covering large areas of upland with heather and peat restoration, several woodland management projects with new planting and restoration, river catchment projects managing soil erosion & flood risk alongside supporting communities affected by flooding. Projects covering our coastal zones supporting this habitat and looking at recreation, supporting tourism and looking at the health and well-being benefits of nature for our communities.

An example of this is the [Dunes to Dunes: Sustainable Management of Bridgend Coastal Landscape](#)

The focus of this project spreads across and between the dune landscapes of the Kenfig Burrows and Merthyr Mawr Warren dune systems in South Wales.

The project's aim is to build a lasting collaboration of land and reserve managers, land owners, users and beneficiaries to help achieve the sustainable management of this coastal landscape to improve biodiversity and provide benefits to the local community.

Habitat management works will help improve the resilience of the dunes ecosystem with increased biodiversity, better connectivity and stability being the main focus. The project will improve the look and accessibility of the area for visitors and enhance their experience through better signposting and advertising of walking routes and attractions. The project aims to maximise the health and well-being opportunities of the area through accessible well-maintained walking routes and quality green spaces.

The project will also work collaboratively with local businesses such as the Golf club supporting them with their ongoing sustainable performance with the ambition to achieve the GEO Certified Eco label. Work will also include woodland planting and harvesting and exploring the potential to use the wood as a renewable fuel source.

The Video case study for this project can be found here. - <https://youtu.be/Pik6G10Ab4c>

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 2022 a total of 548 applications had been approved through seven rounds. 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. 4,412 applications have been received through nine rounds of FBG by the end of 2022.

The **Timber Business Investment Scheme (TBIS)** offers financial support for forest owners to enhance forestry potential. 74 projects under the TBIS umbrella have been delivered throughout the lifetime of the programme.

Supported by the TBIS, [Stradmore Woodland Timber Processing Unit](#) – Saw the establishment of a new round timber processing unit in Stradmore Wood to process both small diameter and oversize hardwood and softwood timber. A bandsaw was purchased to maximise sawn wood recovery and provide a more flexible sawing capability than in the existing sawmill. Mobile equipment to produce hardwood and softwood fencing provided a market for small diameter material from woodlands in Mid & West Wales. A new building was erected, and timber handling equipment purchased.

The **Food Business Investment Scheme (FBIS)** offers financial support for capital investments in food processing equipment. FBIS has been a great success to date, with over £187m new capital projects being developed, in Wales.

[Edwards of Conwy TWSC Site Expansion and Machinery Investment](#) – The aims of this FBIS project were to deliver:

- Increased sales of Edwards' Welsh PGI Beef Burger & Red Tractor Pork Sausages.
- New branded Welsh Chicken and Gluten Free products.
- Own Label new product development and increased capacity.

The project encompassed: -

- Advanced Manufacturing sausage production & packing equipment
- Enhanced New Product Development opportunities and improved processes, using the additional equipment.
- Expanded production area for additional production lines and increased raw material handling & storage space.
- Efficient utilisation of current facilities to provide additional staff facilities, office space.

Rural Business Investment Scheme (Food) financially supports small food and drink processors and manufacturers. RBISF aims to support up to 40 micro and small food and drink processors and manufacturers with capital investment support for projects which offer clear and quantifiable benefits to the food and drink industry in Wales.

A further window of this scheme was opened in 2021, as part of the Covid 19 recovery suite of schemes. Eleven projects were awarded contracts under this scheme. These contracts will continue to be delivered until the end of the programme in 2023.

Micro Small Business Fund (MSBF) is an investment fund targeting eligible capital investment projects in the tourism sector in Wales. Regrettably for reasons related to the Covid pandemic, it has not been possible to complete the programme as expected. The scheme was suspended as a result and a decision was taken in February 2021 not to pursue any new cases. Most projects completed by March 2021, with a small number (8) continuing into the WG 2021/2022 financial year, these finished in March 2022.

4Seasons Holiday Resort Ltd - The project received money from the Micro Small Business Fund to create a 5 Star Holiday Resort to include holiday lodges, static caravans, and touring caravans on one park. Alongside these, will be an indoor/outdoor swimming pool, spa, gym, leisure facilities and five new lakes for fishing & water sports. More than 3.5 km of cycling and walking pathways will also be constructed within the 300-acre resort.

Rural Business Investment Scheme (NonAgri)

This was a new investment scheme to aid Covid-19 economic recovery, the RBIS (Non-Agri) covers capital investments costs and supports projects in Wales that contribute to one or more of the following:

- a) the diversification of the rural economy,
- b) the development of the supply chain for natural products,
- c) increasing the productivity, efficiency, and competitiveness of rural businesses.

Up to £50,000 grant was available to existing and start up non-agricultural enterprises.

Throughout the programme lifetime, there have been two open application windows for this scheme. Fifteen projects were awarded contracts, valued at £0.4m.

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 could benefit from maximum funding of up to £7,500 for capital works under three themes: Carbon, Water and Landscape & Pollinators. There have been over 11,500 approved operations under this scheme.

Glastir Woodland Creation ('GWC') supports land managers who wish to create new woodland and/or manage existing woodlands. GWC pays contract holders a €941.18 (£800.00) contribution towards Registered Glastir Woodland Planner's fees to develop a verified woodland creation plan. The **Glastir Woodland Restoration (GWR)** scheme under Measure 8.4 (support for restoration of damage to forests from forest fires and natural disasters and catastrophic events) supports the re-stocking of larch woodlands that have been infected or threatened by the fungal pathogen *Phytophthora ramorum*. By the end of December 2022, a total of 1,524.38ha of woodland had been restocked, with 229 beneficiaries supported.

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.

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.

Due to Covid 19 Welsh Government worked with LAGS operating LEADER to investigate how the grass-root challenges could be supported using LEADER principles. Each LAG repurposed their LDS to raise to the challenges that the rural communities were experiencing in terms of isolation, food supplies and access to services.

The focus of a lot of the LEADER projects have highlighted the need to adapt to future ways of living and working that have less of an impact on the environment around us.

Delivering under the LEADER Implementation measure (19.2), the [Dyffryn Tywi Partnership - Learning from the Land](#) was implemented by Carmarthenshire LAG in collaboration with The Dyffryn Tywi Partnership. They used GIS to support the 'capture' of local knowledge, creating a one-stop digital platform that improves access to locally focussed information on natural and cultural resources. This work will not only support the tourism providers within the existing partnership, but also benefit private sector tourism operators in the project area as well.

By mapping the natural and cultural assets of the middle reaches of the Tywi valley, the project will promote awareness, understanding and enjoyment of the area's natural and cultural resource and consequently raise Carmarthenshire's profile, to new and existing audiences. It will support cultural services contributing to health and well-being outcomes, recreation and tourism, increase outdoor activity and assist in increasing footfall and dwell-time in the area to support economic development in tourism-based businesses in the area.

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.

Rural Community Development Fund (RCDF) offers financial support for LEADER local action groups and other community organisations. This fund has now closed to new applications.

[Canolfan Mentergarwch Hafod Ceiri](#) is funded under RCDF sub measure 7.4, which supports investments in the setting-up, improvement or expansion of local basic services for the rural population including leisure and culture, and the related infrastructure, the project was to develop a café which is to be used for local products of high quality and will form part of a larger project involving the Hafod Ceiri Centre as a multipurpose and sustainable hub for the village of Llithfaen and wider surroundings by adapting the village Chapel building.

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, shares 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, and publicising activity funded through the Programme.

The WRNSU's role has continued to evolve over the last 12 months, particularly with the continued expansion of the website which now includes details of 1,729 projects and over 140 case studies. [News and events | Business Wales - Business Wales \(gov.wales\)](#)

Wales Rural Network Events & Participation

Hosted by the Wales Rural Network, Wales delivered its End of Term Event on 9th & 10th June 2022 – [Celebrating Rural Wales](#).

Wales Rural Network Support Unit traditionally mark the end of a Programme with an End of Term Conference but last year, WRNSU decided to deliver a real 'celebration' event.

The aim of the event was to bring the projects that have received funding to life – showcasing the real stories from the real beneficiaries. Delivered though a vibrant and 'visual' event with lots of video footage and images taken from successful projects.

Delegates were able to see and hear first-hand the experiences, challenges and successes of those projects that have succeeded thanks to the funding they have received.

The event encompassed an exhibition area showcasing projects in themed areas, a series of themed discussions in a 'chat show' format, interviews with the beneficiaries, a Welsh food & drink networking evening, and a 'Rural Awards'.



Wales Rural Network Rural Awards –

A key element of the event was the presentation of the Wales Rural Network Awards to a number of successful projects which best epitomise the ethos of the funding programme – projects which have helped increase diversity and resilience in farming, forestry and food, investing in green initiatives, tackling poverty, driving competitiveness and creating sustainable growth and jobs for the people who live and work in rural Wales.

Awards were given in four categories -

- Food & Tourism - [Project Helix](#)
- Landscapes, Nature & Forestry - [Pennal 2050](#)
- Innovation - [Caru Cymru / Caring for Wales](#)
- Communities - [Cambrian Futures](#)

Taste of Wales Evening Networking Reception

Canape and drinks reception – Welsh food and drink reception with products to eat and drink against a backdrop showcase display of Welsh products interspersed with key facts and outcomes from the range of RDP projects that have assisted Welsh food and drink companies.

The event included Product Sampling Stations, and a Food Producer Marketplace.

The Two-Day Event Overview

- 360 Delegates over 2 days
- 58 Showcased Projects
- 129 RDP Funded Food & Drink Companies featured.
- 6 themed Panel Discussions

- 10 industry specialist speakers and contributors.

As we are nearing the end of the programme period, the WRNSU role has evolved, there is greater emphasis on learning from best practice to increase resilience and meet the climate change emergency, through digital improvements, strengthen and develop local supply chains and build capacity in communities through the stakeholder engagement activities and the promotion of the RDP funded projects. Further information on our work can be found on the WRN web pages; <https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/>

To ensure we can be as inclusive as possible and increase the knowledge platform profile to all members of society 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/>



9. 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



**Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government**