



The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development:  
Europe investing in rural areas

# Annual implementation report

## United Kingdom - Rural Development Programme (Regional) - Wales

Annual implementation report	
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# 1. KEY INFORMATION ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME AND ITS PRIORITIES

## 1.a) Financial Data

See annexed documents

## 1.b) Common and programme-specific indicators and quantified target values

### 1.b1) Overview table

Focus Area 1A						
Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2025
T1: percentage of expenditure under Articles 14, 15 and 35 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 in relation to the total expenditure for the RDP (focus area 1A)	2014-2023			26.78	101.97	26.26
	2014-2022			19.47	74.14	
	2014-2021			13.93	53.04	
	2014-2020			10.04	38.23	
	2014-2019			6.74	25.67	
	2014-2018			3.76	14.32	
	2014-2017			1.19	4.53	
	2014-2016					
	2014-2015					

Focus Area 1B						
Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2025
T2: Total number of cooperation operations supported under the cooperation measure (Article 35 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013) (groups, networks/clusters, pilot projects...) (focus area 1B)	2014-2023			422.00	88.28	478.00
	2014-2022			324.00	67.78	
	2014-2021			230.00	48.12	
	2014-2020			176.00	36.82	
	2014-2019			86.00	17.99	
	2014-2018			60.00	12.55	
	2014-2017			2.00	0.42	
	2014-2016					
	2014-2015					

Focus Area 1C						
Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2025
T3: Total number of participants trained under Article 14 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 (focus area 1C)	2014-2023			104,288.00	309.31	33,716.00
	2014-2022			98,396.00	291.84	
	2014-2021			86,231.00	255.76	
	2014-2020			57,944.50	171.86	
	2014-2019			22,587.00	66.99	
	2014-2018			10,079.00	29.89	
	2014-2017			5,021.00	14.89	
	2014-2016					
	2014-2015					

Focus Area 2A							
Target indicator name		Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2025
T4: percentage of agricultural holdings with RDP support for investments in restructuring or modernisation (focus area 2A)		2014-2023	15.63	155.08	15.63	155.08	10.08
		2014-2022	14.90	147.84	14.90	147.84	
		2014-2021	13.07	129.68	13.07	129.68	
		2014-2020	10.18	101.00	10.18	101.00	
		2014-2019	6.50	64.49	6.50	64.49	
		2014-2018	2.99	29.67	1.47	14.59	
		2014-2017	0.29	2.88	0.07	0.69	
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					
Measure	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	35,270,775.27	97.94	36,333,010.33	100.89	36,013,862.92
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	8,549,561.71	98.61	8,671,168.32	100.01	8,670,222.23
M04	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	52,018,189.00	137.58	30,177,664.04	79.81	37,809,658.69
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	618,750.00	3.51	546,766.06	3.10	17,651,961.72
Total	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	96,457,275.98	96.32	75,728,608.75	75.62	100,145,705.56

Focus Area 2B							
Target indicator name		Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2025
T5: percentage of agricultural holdings with RDP supported business development plan/investments for young farmers (focus area 2B)		2014-2023					0.73
		2014-2022					
		2014-2021					
		2014-2020					
		2014-2019					
		2014-2018					
		2014-2017					
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					
Measure	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	2,240,943.91				
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	611,771.10				
Total	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	2,852,715.01				

Focus Area 3A							
Target indicator name		Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2025
T6: percentage of agricultural holdings receiving support for participating in quality schemes, local markets and short supply circuits, and producer groups/organisations (focus area 3A)		2014-2023	2.65	387.38	2.65	387.38	0.68
		2014-2022	0.76	111.10	0.76	111.10	
		2014-2021	0.76	111.10	0.76	111.10	
		2014-2020	0.76	111.10	0.76	111.10	
		2014-2019	0.70	102.33	0.70	102.33	
		2014-2018	2.11	308.44	0.41	59.93	
		2014-2017					
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					
Measure	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	54,040,190.23	95.22	57,793,272.74	101.84	56,750,384.42
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	791,518.79	89.15	887,984.37	100.01	887,887.58
M04	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	75,790,531.11	122.28	61,495,647.39	99.22	61,979,492.60
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	6,394,509.97	155.67	4,634,615.54	112.83	4,107,661.68
Total	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	137,016,750.10	110.74	124,811,520.04	100.88	123,725,426.28



Priority P4						
Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2025
T13: percentage of forestry land under management contracts to improve soil management and/or prevent soil erosion (focus area 4C)	2014-2023					0.00
	2014-2022					
	2014-2021					
	2014-2020					
	2014-2019					
	2014-2018					
	2014-2017					
	2014-2016					
	2014-2015					
T11: percentage of forestry land under management contracts to improve water management (focus area 4B)	2014-2023					0.00
	2014-2022					
	2014-2021					
	2014-2020					
	2014-2019					
	2014-2018					
	2014-2017					
	2014-2016					
	2014-2015					
T8: percentage of forest/other wooded area under management contracts supporting biodiversity (focus area 4A)	2014-2023			0.37	13.70	2.70
	2014-2022			0.37	13.70	
	2014-2021			0.99	36.66	
	2014-2020			0.83	30.73	
	2014-2019			0.77	28.51	
	2014-2018			0.75	27.77	
	2014-2017			0.23	8.52	

	2014-2016			0.20	7.41	
	2014-2015			0.01	0.37	
T12: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts to improve soil management and/or prevent soil erosion (focus area 4C)	2014-2023			4.66	93.47	4.99
	2014-2022			4.66	93.47	
	2014-2021			4.89	98.09	
	2014-2020			4.81	96.48	
	2014-2019			4.75	95.28	
	2014-2018			4.46	89.46	
	2014-2017			4.46	89.46	
	2014-2016			4.36	87.45	
	2014-2015					
T10: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts to improve water management (focus area 4B)	2014-2023			6.16	44.54	13.83
	2014-2022			6.16	44.54	
	2014-2021			6.92	50.03	
	2014-2020			6.90	49.89	
	2014-2019			6.62	47.86	
	2014-2018			6.22	44.97	
	2014-2017			6.22	44.97	
	2014-2016			3.14	22.70	
	2014-2015					
T9: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts supporting biodiversity and/or landscapes (focus area 4A)	2014-2023			47.83	123.42	38.75
	2014-2022			47.81	123.37	
	2014-2021			64.48	166.38	
	2014-2020			63.19	163.06	
	2014-2019			54.82	141.46	
	2014-2018			44.72	115.40	
	2014-2017			44.72	115.40	

		2014-2016			20.94	54.03	
		2014-2015			1.60	4.13	
Measure	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	7,752,461.11	156.37	8,486,813.00	171.18	4,957,694.96
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	3,248,854.64	93.54	3,472,452.06	99.98	3,473,111.13
M04	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	90,950,447.41	164.90	55,875,234.47	101.31	55,154,016.92
M08	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	29,124,577.87	165.24	19,679,536.40	111.65	17,625,497.04
M10	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	329,092,525.09	100.56	326,966,862.70	99.91	327,273,975.33
M11	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	37,224,580.90	100.75	37,224,580.57	100.75	36,947,697.63
M15	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	0.00				
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	29,931,680.57	119.98	24,854,555.89	99.63	24,947,707.58
Total	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	527,325,127.59	112.11	476,560,035.09	101.31	470,379,700.59

Focus Area 5B							
Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2025	
T15: Total investment for energy efficiency (€) (focus area 5B)	2014-2023	15,263,598.45	119.83	15,263,598.45	119.83	12,737,428.01	
	2014-2022	15,123,587.50	118.73	15,123,587.50	118.73		
	2014-2021	14,772,957.65	115.98	14,772,957.65	115.98		
	2014-2020	14,254,387.60	111.91	14,254,387.60	111.91		
	2014-2019	13,996,168.15	109.88	13,996,168.15	109.88		
	2014-2018	11,587,950.75	90.98	9,380,795.88	73.65		
	2014-2017	1,586,895.45	12.46	1,586,895.45	12.46		
	2014-2016						
	2014-2015						
Measure	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	900,853.54	96.30	945,347.62	101.06	935,425.01
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	240,771.00	98.61	244,195.75	100.01	244,169.08
M04	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	11,754,015.31	230.70	6,105,439.38	119.83	5,094,971.20
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	309,375.00	113.43	273,383.01	100.23	272,742.10
Total	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	13,205,014.85	201.69	7,568,365.76	115.60	6,547,307.39

Focus Area 5C							
Target indicator name		Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2025
T16: Total investment in renewable energy production (€) (focus area 5C)		2014-2023	3,655,841.72	22.47	3,655,841.72	22.47	16,268,534.96
		2014-2022	3,264,583.48	20.07	3,264,583.48	20.07	
		2014-2021	2,414,357.44	14.84	2,414,357.44	14.84	
		2014-2020	2,195,851.24	13.50	2,195,851.24	13.50	
		2014-2019	979,025.41	6.02	979,025.41	6.02	
		2014-2018	1,633,794.74	10.04			
		2014-2017					
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					
Measure	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	900,853.54	96.30	945,347.49	101.06	935,425.01
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	189,698.93	98.61	192,396.59	100.01	192,375.64
M04	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	18,367,002.28				
M07	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	636,683.54	186.85	317,313.90	93.12	340,745.75
M08	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	1,881,375.30	29.66	1,334,083.75	21.03	6,343,856.03
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	309,375.00	113.43	273,383.04	100.23	272,742.10
Total	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	22,284,988.59	275.63	3,062,524.77	37.88	8,085,144.53

Focus Area 5D							
Target indicator name		Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2025
T18: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts targeting reduction of GHG and/or ammonia emissions (focus area 5D)		2014-2023			6.35	151.18	4.20
		2014-2022			6.35	151.18	
		2014-2021			8.55	203.56	
		2014-2020			8.33	198.32	
		2014-2019			6.40	152.37	
		2014-2018			4.42	105.23	
		2014-2017			4.42	105.23	
		2014-2016			3.11	74.04	
		2014-2015					
Measure	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	900,853.54	96.30	945,347.41	101.06	935,425.01
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	1,695,613.03	98.61	1,719,729.90	100.01	1,719,542.28
M04	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	19,012,657.43	219.05	17,535,147.02	202.03	8,679,676.22
M10	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	11,913,100.52	92.21	13,898,069.96	107.57	12,919,834.31
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	309,375.00	113.43	273,383.01	100.23	272,742.10
Total	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	33,831,599.52	137.93	34,371,677.30	140.14	24,527,219.91

Focus Area 5E							
Target indicator name		Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2025
T19: percentage of agricultural and forest land under management contracts contributing to carbon sequestration and conservation (focus area 5E)		2014-2023			0.13	57.78	0.22
		2014-2022			0.13	57.78	
		2014-2021			0.19	84.45	
		2014-2020			0.18	80.00	
		2014-2019			0.18	80.00	
		2014-2018			0.13	57.78	
		2014-2017			0.13	57.78	
		2014-2016			0.03	13.33	
		2014-2015					
Measure	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	900,853.54	96.30	945,347.68	101.06	935,425.01
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	693,913.10	127.19	544,893.99	99.88	545,566.74
M04	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	3,410,234.53	63.48	3,395,788.05	63.21	5,372,010.48
M08	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	31,076,032.55	196.53	14,204,159.57	89.83	15,812,195.94
M10	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	2,169,731.78	109.05	2,310,424.73	116.12	1,989,709.97
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	497,939.71	143.86	347,043.49	100.26	346,132.15
Total	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	38,748,705.21	154.99	21,747,657.51	86.99	25,001,040.29

Focus Area 6A							
Target indicator name		Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2025
T20: Jobs created in supported projects (focus area 6A)		2014-2023			20.20	2.64	765.00
		2014-2022			15.20	1.99	
		2014-2021			12.20	1.59	
		2014-2020			12.20	1.59	
		2014-2019			2.00	0.26	
		2014-2018			2.00	0.26	
		2014-2017					
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					
Measure	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	448,607.33	91.04	492,831.33	100.01	492,777.61
M06	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	18,180,801.04	285.94	6,509,581.32	102.38	6,358,289.23
M08	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	10,388,501.18	819.18	6,368,786.82	502.21	1,268,162.24
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	3,237,375.37	124.95	2,853,944.16	110.15	2,590,971.23
Total	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	32,255,284.92	301.16	16,225,143.63	151.49	10,710,200.31

Focus Area 6B						
Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2025
T23: Jobs created in supported projects (Leader) (focus area 6B)	2014-2023			66.92	66.92	100.00
	2014-2022			43.51	43.51	
	2014-2021			35.11	35.11	
	2014-2020			9.00	9.00	
	2014-2019			4.00	4.00	
	2014-2018			12.00	12.00	
	2014-2017					
	2014-2016					
	2014-2015					
T22: percentage of rural population benefiting from improved services/infrastructures (focus area 6B)	2014-2023			3.46	7.60	45.53
	2014-2022			3.41	7.49	
	2014-2021			3.35	7.36	
	2014-2020			3.24	7.12	
	2014-2019			0.67	1.47	
	2014-2018			1.93	4.24	
	2014-2017			45.53	100.01	
	2014-2016					
	2014-2015					
T21: percentage of rural population covered by local development strategies (focus area 6B)	2014-2023			45.53	100.01	45.53
	2014-2022			45.53	100.01	
	2014-2021			45.53	100.01	
	2014-2020			45.53	100.01	
	2014-2019			45.53	100.01	
	2014-2018			45.53	100.01	
	2014-2017			45.53	100.01	



		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					
Measure	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	4,411,481.77	99.24	216,513.23	4.87	4,445,163.64
M07	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	22,976,939.13	108.97	21,124,146.76	100.18	21,086,090.05
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	117,559,722.10	140.64	104,351,316.63	124.84	83,590,779.26
M19	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	61,020,986.53	114.88	53,175,328.10	100.11	53,117,904.70
Total	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	205,969,129.53	126.95	178,867,304.72	110.25	162,239,937.65

Focus Area 6C							
Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2025	
T24: percentage of rural population benefiting from new or improved services/infrastructures (ICT) (focus area 6C)	2014-2023			0.63	3.82	16.47	
	2014-2022			0.62	3.76		
	2014-2021			0.62	3.76		
	2014-2020			0.43	2.61		
	2014-2019						
	2014-2018						
	2014-2017						
	2014-2016						
	2014-2015						
Measure	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	450,426.78	96.30	472,673.64	101.06	467,712.51
M07	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	1,531,761.18	170.82	920,266.90	102.63	896,699.33
Total	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	1,982,187.96	145.28	1,392,940.54	102.09	1,364,411.84

## 1.c) Key information on RDP implementation based on data from a) and b) by Focus Area

### Financial Overview

Activity described within this report covers the period from the final quarter of 2015 (October - December 2015) when Programme payments commenced through to 31 December 2023.

The 6th Programme amendment was adopted by the EC during November 2023, this amendment was the final adjustment to the Programme. It solely focused on the financial aspects, to ensure the optimal/complete utilisation of the funds.

Payments of €197.6m were made for activity undertaken and claimed during 2023, bringing the total paid since the start of the Programme to €985.2m. This represents 100.8% of the Programme allocation. The EAFRD element of the Programme funding €651.6m was fully drawn down by 31 December 2023.

To ensure the EAFRD was fully optimised across the various Measures the Programme was over committed, with claims paid in excess of the Measure level allocations. Welsh Government is aware that spend will be capped at the EAFRD Measure level allocation, they have made provision for this from the WG domestic budgets.

The Pillar 1 transfer funding element of the Programme (€288.2m) was fully drawn down by 31 December 2023.

### RDP Wales 2014-2020

Measure	Total EAFRD Allocation €	Total EAFRD Requested €*	Total Public €*
1	€ 56,481,316	€ 56,856,108	€ 107,083,673
2	€ 8,599,596	€ 8,599,596	€ 16,225,652
4	€ 129,951,373	€ 130,083,136	€ 174,584,920
6	€ 3,369,893	€ 3,450,078	€ 6,509,581
7	€ 11,830,206	€ 11,850,448	€ 22,361,728
8	€ 26,044,398	€ 26,331,869	€ 41,586,567
10	€ 241,655,026	€ 242,318,597	€ 343,175,357
11	€ 31,888,354	€ 32,025,629	€ 37,224,581
16	€ 83,438,976	€ 85,737,079	€ 138,408,391

19	€	34,659,715	€	34,688,281	€	53,175,328
20	€	23,671,310	€	23,759,331	€	44,828,927
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>€</b>	<b>651,590,163</b>	<b>€</b>	<b>655,700,152</b>	<b>€</b>	<b>985,164,705</b>

\* Figures include any adjustments to the Final Accounts

#### RDP Wales 2014-2020

Priority	Total EAFRD Requested*	Total Public Requested*
Priority 2	€ 45,269,946	€ 75,728,609
Priority 3	€ 72,787,505	€ 124,811,520
Priority 4	€ 354,991,680	€ 476,560,035
Priority 5	€ 40,361,414	€ 66,750,225
Priority 6	€ 118,530,276	€ 196,485,389
TA	€ 23,759,331	€ 44,828,927
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>€ 655,700,152</b>	<b>€ 985,164,705</b>

\* Figures include any adjustments to the Final Accounts

The 2023 N+3 target for the Programme was met in advance of the end of the Programme.

#### Measure 20: Technical Assistance

Activity funded by Technical Assistance (TA) is essential for the successful implementation of the WGRC RDP 2014-20. Activities funded include technical input to the viability of projects, programme implementation and the development of IT systems. TA funds a number of mandatory elements of the RDP such as the Wales Rural Network (WRN) and monitoring and evaluation costs of the Programme. Technical Assistance also supports actions that support administrative capacity linked to the management of ESI funds. These actions include those associated with supporting the implementation of the programme.

Technical Assistance projects allow the WG to meet the regulatory requirements for the delivery of the Rural Development Programme, activities funded include: Glastir Implementation, NRW Woodland Management Planning, Business Improvements, Managing Authority & Delivery Costs, Monitoring & Evaluation, On the Spot Checks, Technical Appraisal, Analysis & Inspection and the Wales Rural Network.

Total payments of €10.4m were made during 2023 of which €5.5m was EAFRD, providing a total cumulative spend of €44.8m. The EAFRD element of Measure 20 was fully drawn down by 31 December 2023.

TA activities are delivered under Measure 20.1, with the WRN funded through Measure 20.2.

#### RDP Wales 2014-2020

Measure	Total EAFRD Allocation €	Total EAFRD Requested	Total Public
20.1		€ 22,504,996	€ 42,462,258
20.2		€ 1,254,335	€ 2,366,669
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>€ 23,671,310</b>	<b>€ 23,759,331</b>	<b>€ 44,828,927</b>

NB: To ensure the EAFRD was fully optimised across the various Measures the Programme was over committed, with claims paid in excess of the Measure level allocations. Welsh Government is aware that spend will be capped at the EAFRD Measure level allocation, they have made provision for this from the WG domestic budgets.

## **IMPLEMENTATION BY FOCUS AREA**

### **PRIORITY 1: FOCUS AREAS 1A, 1B, 1C**

Measures 1 (Knowledge Transfer & Information Actions), 2 (Advisory Services) & 16 (Co-operation) are programmed under Priority 1 Focus Area 1A, with Measure 16 also contributing to Focus Area 1B and Measure 1 to Focus Area 1C. In Wales, the Knowledge Transfer and Information actions, along with advisory services, farm management and farm relief services, are horizontal Measures relevant to all Priorities of the Programme with actions within the Measures programmed under specific Focus Areas of the other Priorities. Activity also contributes directly to meeting the cross-cutting objectives of innovation, climate change and the environment.

A cumulative total of €107.08m grant award was incurred in respect of Measure 1 (Knowledge Transfer), €16.2m under Measure 2 (Advisory Services) and €138.41m under Measure 16 (cooperation) across the Programme during the reporting period.

Regarding achievement against Target Indicators under Priority 1 of the Programme a cumulative total of €391.72m expenditure (102% achievement against indicator T1) was recorded for Measures 1 (Knowledge Transfer), 2 (Advisory Services) & 16 (Cooperation), with 422 Cooperation operations supported through the whole of Measure 16 (88.3% uptake against indicator T2) and 103,364 participants recorded (306.57% uptake against indicator T3) by the programme closure, at the end of December 2023.

#### **Measure 1.1-1.3 Knowledge Transfer and Innovation Actions.**

The Knowledge Transfer and Innovation (KT&I) Scheme supported the knowledge, training and information requirements of farming, forestry and food manufacturing Small Medium Enterprise businesses for the creation of a more sustainable and competitive rural economy. The WG developed the Farming Connect Framework which comprised an integrated pan Wales programme of knowledge transfer and innovation support. The programme provided a strong and widely recognised platform of support to help the farming sector. Farming Connect, the Knowledge Transfer & Innovation Programme 2007-2023, (“the Programme”) concluded on 19 March 2023.

Comprising of an integrated programme of knowledge transfer, innovation and advisory service, the Programme was designed to deliver greater sustainability, improved competitiveness, and improved environmental performance for farming businesses.

The principal component of the Programme was ‘strategic knowledge transfer’ and this was the primary support mechanism for the agricultural industry in Wales. The contractors delivered training and advice on

new technologies and production techniques to the Welsh farming industry; with the aim being to enable them to diversify, improve business viability and access new markets for their products and services as well as supporting them to become more resilient and sustainable. A number of relevant strategic documents and action plans have influenced the development and focus of the Programme. These and other emerging strategies, priorities, action plans and legislation continue to be key drivers for activity and setting the strategic direction for the new Programme, which commenced on 1 April 2023.

The introduction of the themed approach as a result of the refresh that took place in 2019, resulted in a more focused and streamlined programme of support with baselines promoted as best practice and a starting point for a client's journey through the Programme, ensuring support is based on need. Additional information has been provided below.

To deliver key strategic outcomes, as set by Welsh Government, including Programme for Government commitments, an extension to the Farming Connect Programme (all lots) for a further seven months was agreed. The extension ended on 19 March 2023.

The Themes:

The three themes (Business; Land; Livestock) form the basis for the “on the ground” delivery. All interventions, messages and packages of support (bar Health & Safety) fall under one of these themes.

The identified baselines associated with the 3 themes are:

Business - Business Plan/benchmarking

Land - Nutrient Management Plans

Livestock - Animal Health Plans

The Pandemic has continued to have a profound impact on the services delivered. Closely monitoring this impact has allowed the timely introduction of a range of new delivery methods including digital delivery across a range of interventions. During the transition to digital delivery, several opportunities and challenges presented themselves. One such opportunity was the use of webinars to host one to many activities. Not having to travel long distances to attend allowed viewers from across Wales to participate, where normally in the main it would be restricted to “local” participation. On the negative side digital delivery has also brought challenges such as connectivity issues and IT poverty (IT literacy and access to software/hardware).

The lessons learnt have enabled us to establish a hybrid approach to delivery. However, what shouldn't be forgotten is the benefit to a farmer's mental health & wellbeing resulting from attending an event and being able to converse with their peers – no amount of digital delivery can make up for the lack of face to face interaction.

### **Measure 1.1**

Under Measure 1.1 (vocational training & skills acquisition) a cumulative total of €67.05m has been spent. During 2023 the two core delivery mechanisms within the Programme delivering Measure 1.1 activity were Farming Connect and Project HELIX.

Project HELIX provides funding support for research into global food production, trends and waste to help

small to medium sized food manufacturers across Wales to increase production and reduce waste. Developed by Food Innovation Wales (FIW), a partnership of three food centres, Project HELIX supports food manufacturers in Innovation, Efficiency and Strategy. Further information on Project HELIX can be found under the Focus Area 3a section of this report.

Farming Connect has developed several vocational training initiatives under this Measure which deliver to multiple Focus Areas:

- One to one mentoring

Designed to benefit new entrants, businesses considering a significant strategic change in direction and individuals looking to exit the industry and who are considering share/contract farming possibilities this initiative was developed by Farming Connect to provide farmers and foresters with peer-to-peer mentoring. Up until 19 March 2023, 846 mentees have been assigned a mentor. The topics focussed on in 2023 included amongst others diversification, ICT and succession.

- Agri Academy

The Agri Academy brings together individuals making their way into the agricultural industry in Wales, giving them the inspiration, confidence, skills and contacts, they need to become future rural leaders, professional business people and aspiring entrepreneurs. The Programme, which provides training, mentoring, support and guidance, is split into two distinct programmes:

- i. The Business and Innovation programme – aimed at supporting and inspiring the next generation of farming and forestry innovators and entrepreneurs in Wales.
- ii. The Junior programme – aimed at supporting young people aged between 16 and 19 years who hope to follow a career in the food, farming and forestry industries (a joint collaboration with Wales Young Farmers' Clubs).

Since the start of the Programme, Farming Connect has supported 155 participants through Agri Academy.

## Skills

Through the skills Programme, individuals can access up to 80% funding for completing short accredited training courses on key topics. To access the training courses individuals must complete an online Personal Development Plan - this helps identify individual as well as business needs together with the training courses, which could help them to become more efficient, skilled and profitable. It also helps identify a mechanism by which to strengthen or introduce new skills to the business.

7,135 Personal Development Plans (PDP) had been completed up until 31 March 2023.

There has been a total of 7,934 instances of completed accredited training, covering 90 courses. Examples of courses completed in the period include:

Level 2 Safe Use of Pesticides (PA1) & Safe Application of Pesticides Using Vehicle Mounted Boom Sprayer Equipment (PA2) - 817 individuals

Rough Terrain Telescopic Lift Truck – 531 individuals

Marketing your business – 287 individuals

DIY AI – 510 individuals

Cattle Foot Trimming – 422 individuals

Book Keeping & VAT – 403 individuals.

E-learning

109 interactive e-learning modules were made available on the BOSS Platform, across the themes of Business, Land and Livestock. The fully funded online modules covered a wide variety of topics and are available free, to all Farming Connect registered individuals that have access to the BOSS Platform.

Up until 19 March 2023, 6,757 e-learning courses were accessed and completed by individuals. Examples of courses include:

Planning & Finance – 159 individuals

Grazing Management – 156 individuals

Sheep Lameness – 102 individuals

Weed Control – 96 individuals.

Lambing the Basics – 89 individuals.

Tree Identification – 89 individuals.

Improving soil health - 87 individuals

Liver Fluke Management – 75 individuals

Health and Safety (compulsory for machinery or equipment courses) remains the most popular course available.

Storfa Sgiliau / Skills Store

Farming Connect provided a fully funded Continuous Professional Development recording system to capture all knowledge transfer and training activity undertaken by registered individuals during the Programme..

Storfa Sgiliau provides a one-stop on-line system for users, to track and store their records of learning and training certificates. Enabling them to build a comprehensive CV for use in applications for employment and Farm Assurance checks.

The recording system sits on the Business Wales (BOSS) website and is free to access and use by all individuals registered with the Farming Connect Programme.

Storfa Sgiliau provided a one-stop on-line system for users, to track and store their records of learning and training certificates. Enabling them to build a comprehensive CV for use in applications for employment

and Farm Assurance checks.

The recording system was available on the Business Wales (BOSS) website and was free to access and use by all individuals registered with the Farming Connect Programme.

Storfa Sgiliau enabled users to have instant access to a downloadable or digital reports which set out an individual's skills, training and relevant academic / professional achievements. It also provided evidence of training courses undertaken for the benefit of Farm Assurance Schemes and supply chain organisations including wholesalers, retailers etc

## Measure 1.2

Under Measure 1.2 (demonstration activities and information actions) a cumulative total of €39.44m was spent by the end of 2023 of which €3.59m was spent during 2023. Farming Connect are the sole deliverer of demonstration activities under this Measure, activity during 2023 included: -

### Demonstration Network

Up until 19 March 2023, the Farming Connect Demonstration Network supported 30 Demonstration farms and has recruited 214 Focus sites. The sites promoted innovation and new technology that was available for farmers and foresters and provided a practical platform to demonstrate how this new technology/technique could be implemented at farm/forestry level.

Up until 19 March 2023, 978 events had been hosted on the demonstration network with 14,088 attendees. Examples of projects undertaken on the Demonstration network include.

Demonstration Farm Project - Using LoRaWAN connectivity to collect real time Nitrate sensor readings in a winter wheat field – Pantyderi. Details of this project can be found [here](#).

### Discussion Groups

Discussion groups are made up of approximately 8 beneficiaries who meet regularly following a structured programme with clear aims and outcomes identified from the outset. Between autumn 2015 until 19 March 2023 163 groups were recruited with 2,610 individual members representing 2,100 businesses.

The groups are collecting data that is relevant to their business needs and compare this data and learn about the benefits of recording information, which is then used to help make management decisions.

The **Dalehead discussion group** consists of 10 businesses from across Wales who all supply Dalehead Foods Ltd, the group were formed from discussions with Dalehead and Farming Connect to try and improve the lamb sector in Wales. The group comprises early, middle and late lambing systems and a mixture of conventional and organic systems, with varying land types and topographies.

### Action Learning (Agrigôp)

Agrigôp was a fully funded action-learning programme, which brought together forward-thinking, like-minded individuals from farm and forestry businesses at a local level. Working together in groups of 6-10, group members learnt new management skills, gained confidence, accessed specialist information, explored and developed viable futures for their businesses. Based on the concept of action learning, Agrigôp provided the opportunity to progress skills and confidence, which in turn assisted the development of ideas



and opportunities to move businesses forward.

205 groups were established across Wales facilitated by local Agrisgôp leaders. They held meetings at regular intervals; during this period, 1,529 meetings took place.

No new groups were established in 2023, due to the contract ending. Examples of group outcomes include:

Establishing 40 new beehives

- Supporting 75 individuals to diversify their enterprises to on-farm tourism
- Supporting 43 individuals to set up their own meat boxes and sell directly to customers
- Supporting farmers to invest in renewable chip systems totalling £3.5 million

One to one surgeries and clinics

One to one surgeries allowed beneficiaries to receive bespoke advice on a variety of topics e.g. strategic business planning, succession planning, IT, planning, and marketing and diversification.

Since the beginning of the Programme there have been 2,498 clinics that have taken place with 14,082 beneficiaries, likewise some 1,104 surgeries have taken place with 6,074 beneficiaries.

Diversification Awareness Seminars

These events aimed to help farmers and foresters understand the essential elements of developing diversification ventures. Regional and digital events were held to outline the key elements of planning a diversification project with attendees signposted to the additional support and advice available through the Farming Connect Programme. Up to 19 March 2023 24 events were held with 1,505 beneficiaries.

Venture

This was an initiative 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 guided 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 19 March 2023, there were 315 active members and out of these 27 potential matches have been identified. The individuals who have found potential business partners applied for group advice through the advisory service for further support.

There have been 75 new joint venture enterprises established since the start of the Programme.

### **Measure 1.3**

Under Measure 1.3 (management exchanges and farm visits) a cumulative total of €0.59m was spent by the end of 2023, of which €0.02m was spent during 2023. Farming Connect is the sole deliverer of demonstration activities under this Measure, activity during 2023 included:

- Management exchanges and farm visits

- Farm and Forest short term visits

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 to innovate your enterprise. The groups receive funding to support a study visit within the UK for up to 4 days.

48 groups have undertaken visits to a variety of destinations including Scotland, Yorkshire and the West Midlands. Topics of interest have included diversification, personal development and goat farming.

#### Farm and Forest exchanges

Successful individuals undertake a visit to other farm or forestry situations within the EU to learn about new and improved ways of working in the farming or forestry sectors. They can also host a suitably trained and experienced farm or forest manager to visit their holding and learn about different approaches to business management. The aim is to broaden their knowledge, technical ability and management expertise to provide new development opportunities at both a personal and business level.

65 individuals have completed their exchange visits and reports have been published on the Farming Connect website. The visit topics range from conservation farming and carbon sequestration, self-sufficiency for first generation farmers, chicken gender determination and suckler herd viability and factors effecting herd profitability.

#### **Measure 2**

Under Measure 2 (Advisory Services, farm management & farm relief services) a cumulative total of €16.23m was spent by the end of 2023.

#### **Measures 2.1 & 2.2**

The Farming Connect Advisory Service provides a range of subsidised, independent, confidential, and bespoke advice to farm and forestry businesses. Available on a one-to-one basis the individual advice element is up to 80% funded and group advice is 100% funded up to a maximum of €1,500.

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

Eligible businesses are able to access subsidised advice on a range of specific topics to reach their end goal.

A range of advisors were available, with different specialisms and all with a wealth of experience and knowledge to deliver advice. A random selection of advisory reports were sent to IBERS to be quality assured. This QA process ensured that the reports were of a high quality and provided value for money.

Up until 12 March 3,249 instances of 1:1 and 6,027 instances of Group advice have been completed and claimed.

The following breakdown shows the categories of advice individual businesses have claimed since the start of the Programme (01/10/2015 – 19/03/2023).

- Business Planning – 1,979
- Business Planning – Forestry Management – 48
- Technical Grassland & Crop Management – 5,570

- Technical Livestock Management & Performance – 804
- Technical Diversification and Added Value – 138
- Technical Timber processing and Added Value – 1
- Technical Horticulture – 11
- Technical Organic – 1
- Technical Agri Environment, ecosystems & Biodiversity – 39
- Technical Woodland Management - 6

As a result of the significant increase in demand for the service during the early summer, following Ministerial and CPS approval additional funding was awarded to the Advisory Service in August 2021 (Departure Request Ref Number: D074/2021/2022). The additional funding, a value of €1.32m was approved to support the continuation of delivery within the existing contract up to the end of the contract in August 2022.

In order to deliver key strategic outcomes as set by Welsh Government, including Programme for Government commitments, an extension to the Farming Connect Programme including the Advisory Service was approved for a further seven months, with the new contract ending 19 March 2023. An additional €1.05m was approved (supported by a Ministerial commitment - *MA/LG/2152/21*) for the purpose of extending the Advisory Service in line with the main Farming Connect Programme.

### **Measure 2.1**

Farming Connect has enabled effective working across measures to ensure complementarity and support delivery of multiple objectives. This is demonstrated through Measure 2.1, where Glastir has used advisory support to develop water management plans carried out and woodland plans continue to be verified against the UK Forestry Standard by Natural Resources Wales (NRW). It also requires use of the expertise of Wales' archaeological trusts to give Contract Managers advice on the most suitable management for Glastir Advanced contracts. During 2020 the work concerned Glastir Small Grants, Glastir Woodland Creation and Glastir Woodland Restoration. The trusts ran a woodland planner training day. During the reporting year, advice was provided on small grant applications and Glastir Woodland Creation / Restoration applications.

Further information on Glastir activity under Measure 2.1 can be found under Priority 4 and 5 sections of this report.

Total cumulative spend under Measure 2 by the end of 2023 was €16.23m, with €0.37m under Sub Measure 2.2.

### **Measure 2.3**

This Measure (support for training of advisors) was removed during the second Programme amendment approved in March 2019.

### **Measure 16.1**

EIP Wales was introduced in January 2016 to fund agricultural projects across Wales that encouraged the collaboration between farmers and others that work within the sector. Bringing people from both practical and scientific backgrounds creates a great opportunity to draw from different experiences, benefit from the latest knowledge and introduce new ideas whilst tackling problems.

In August 2017, Menter a Busnes was awarded the contract to run EIP Wales; this included the management and facilitation of every stage from enquiry through to awarding contracts and execution of the successful projects.

During the application stage the farmer groups were supported by the Farming Connect Knowledge Exchange Hub. A collaboration between Farming Connect and IBERS, Aberystwyth University, the Hub undertook background literature searches into their proposed topic to gain a better understanding of what was already known about the topic and to inform the project of any gaps in the information that may need to be investigated. The Hub also provided support and guidance on project designs.

The Groups were able to seek fully funded support from Innovation Brokers, who provide guidance and support throughout the application process. All applications were assessed by an Assessment Panel, comprising of Farming Connect, Welsh Government and Professor Wynne Jones OBE FRAGS independent agriculture expert.

A total of 46 EIP operations have been supported and have received EIP Wales funding, meeting the procured contract target. All EIP Wales operations and results can be found here. Within the 46 approved operations, there are 555 further EIP cooperation operations supported.

Within the 46 projects, there were 317 partners, comprising of 237 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. 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.

Sub Measure 16.1, European Innovation Programme, reports to multiple focus areas – 2A, 3A, P4, 5B, 5C, 5D and 5E. Please see the relevant priority area below for relevant information on 16.1.

Total cumulative expenditure by the end of 2023 was €2.73m under Measure 16.1.

## **PRIORITY 2: FOCUS AREA 2A**

Measures 1, 2, 4.1 and 16.1 are programmed under Priority 2. Please see Priority 1 section above for information on Measures 1 (Knowledge Transfer) and 2 (Advisory Services) Farming Connect delivery and also Measure 16.1 (EIP) during the reporting period. Focus Area 2b has not been programmed in Wales.

Under Priority 2a cumulative total of €75.73m expenditure has been incurred, of which €6.73m was for activity undertaken during 2023. This included €36.33m under Measure 1, €8.7m under Measure 2, €30.18m under Measure 4 and €0.55m under Measure 16 during the reporting period.

Regarding achievement against Target Indicators under Priority 2 of the Programme the percentage of agri holdings receiving support in investments for restructuring or modernisation (indicator T4) was 15.63%% (3,770 absolute value) by the end of 2023 against a baseline value of 24,120 agricultural holdings in Wales. Progress in implementing Measure 4.1 (support for investments in agricultural holdings) has been provided below.

## Measure 4.1

The **Sustainable Production Grant (SPG)** scheme under Measure 4.1 primarily delivers under Focus Area 2a in addition to Focus Areas 5b and 5d. The scheme provides support to help farmers improve the economic and environmental performance of their agricultural holding in line with the Welsh Government's and agriculture industry in Wales' vision for more sustainable, profitable and resilient farm businesses. It provides capital investment in facilities and equipment relating to animal health and welfare, crop storage, production housing and handling, renewable energy production and soil and crop management. Grants represent a maximum 40% contribution and, for the first three rounds of the scheme, ranged from a minimum of €18.82k to a maximum of €470.59k to increase on-farm investment, production and resource efficiencies to improve technical performance.

The first three rounds of SPG saw 295 claims being submitted and processed for payment, totalling over €14.7m. A total of 394 claims have been received for SPG windows 4 to 6, of which 85% have been processed for payment, worth €3.36m. From round four of the scheme, the focus of the scheme changed to address on-farm nutrient storage and management, with a pre-identified list of capital items and a maximum grant range of €10,200 to €42,500.

**The Farm Business Grant (FBG)**, also programmed under Measure 4.1, aimed to help farmers in Wales to improve the economic and environmental performance of their agricultural holdings. The grant provided a financial contribution towards standard costed capital investments in equipment and machinery, which had been pre-identified as offering clear and quantifiable benefits to farm enterprises. The minimum grant available is €3,529k (£3,000k) and the maximum is €14,118k (£12,000k). To be eligible to apply to the FBG, at least one member of the farming business had to attend a Farming Connect *Farming for the Future* event. As the industry was entering a critical period of change, businesses were encouraged to take the opportunity to ensure any investment they made supported them to become more sustainable, prosperous and resilient for the future. The eighth round of the FBG opened 1 March 2021 and closed on 9 April 2021. A total of 701 contracts were offered worth €4.29m. 571 farmers accepted the offer of a contract worth €3.47m. As the value of the contracts accepted was less than the €5.88m budget allocated to FBG in 2021, a further window opened on 1 September and closed 1 October 2021 worth €2.35m. A total of 378 contracts were offered worth €2.10m. 272 farmers accepted the offer of a contract worth €1.47m.

The Welsh Government also held targeted rounds of the FBG, to support farmers to cover existing yards to reduce the volume of rainwater entering slurry stores. The aim of the FBG-Yard Coverings (FBG-YC) scheme was to improve current on-farm infrastructure, ultimately reducing their production costs. The scheme supported the covering of previously uncovered existing livestock feeding and gathering areas, manure storage areas, as well as existing slurry and silage stores. The scheme was based on a standard cost per metre squared of roof installed.

Please also see Priority 5 section of this report for further information on Measure 4.1 delivery.

## Measure 4.3

Measure 4.3 was to be delivered through the 'Farm and Forestry Infrastructure Scheme, however this scheme was never launched.

## Measure 16.1

The European Innovation Partnership reported to multiple focus areas, Under focus area 2A, the EIP

supported a total of 111 further cooperation operations, with a cumulative expenditure of €0.54m.

With regards to our programmed **performance framework indicators** under priority 2, below is the end of programme achievement, up to end of December 2023.

We have only achieved 75.62% of the expenditure against the Performance Framework Indicator for Priority 2

Upon interrogation it is evident that this underachievement relates to two individual projects under sub measure 16.2, Cooperation and Supply Chain Development Scheme (CSCDS). These were approved early on in the programme delivery. Both projects have been created on the Welsh Government delivery platform and have been allocated against priority 6, 6B. During the programme lifetime, a total of €17.05m has been paid to these two operations and is recorded against 6B rather than 2A. It is evident that spend relating to these cases is showing against the output for priority 6, and the expenditure stands at 112.72% of the target. To reallocate the projects to the correct FA would have meant a rebuild of the IT system, which would have added considerable delay to the schemes delivering under the RDP banner. The other option was to begin the application process again, and all applicants would have had to reapply etc. The work they had already started would have been retrospective and become ineligible expenditure. The anomaly was discovered during Annual Implementation Report extensive checks during 2021.

Priority	Outputs	Target	Achieved	Percentage Achieved
2	Total public expenditure	€ 100.15	€ 75.73	75.62%
2	Number of holdings supported	2,431	3,770	155.08%
2	No of Participants in Training	10,010	17,608	175.90%

**PRIORITY 3:**

**FOCUS AREA 3A**

**Meaure 1.1**

Measure 1.1 is delivered under Focus Area 3a of the Programme, through the Knowledge Transfer & Innovation Scheme.

All of the proposed activities within Project Helix are aligned with the Welsh Government strategic priorities in Taking Wales Forward, particularly supporting the economy, business and jobs, as well as the business growth and market development actions of Towards Sustainable Growth. These activities contribute to a Prosperous Wales – one of the seven goals in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, as well as the five ways of working, including collaboration with industry for the long term development and growth of the food and drink sector.

Project Helix has been aligned with Programme for Government priorities and, in accordance with the Regulations governing the European Programmes, all projects funded through the Common Strategic Framework integrate the Cross Cutting Themes (CCT’s) of Equal Opportunities and Gender Mainstreaming and Sustainable Development. In addition, the scheme has particular importance in the

context of Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion.

The Pan Wales partnership developed by the three food centres has at its core, the development of rural and valleys communities and the creation of sustainable jobs to impact on poverty throughout Wales. Recent work undertaken by the centres has identified growth in the sector which tends to originate in areas where unemployment is highest, i.e. rural communities and the South Wales valleys. Due to Wales' geographical location the strategy for a sustainable food sector must focus on the development of start-up companies and support to SMEs. Historically the sale of larger companies to food multi nationals will, in the majority of cases, create a re-alignment of production capacity - this results in the manufacturing site often being incorporated into other processing facilities elsewhere in the UK and internationally. Innovation and food company regeneration is therefore the key to a vibrant, effective and longstanding Welsh food and drink sector.

**Project HELIX** is designed to develop Welsh businesses in turn enabling them to attend UK and International Food and Drink related trade exhibitions and trade development visits, which are a key component for increasing growth and improving the competitiveness of companies in Wales.

The project has been developed into three key areas and is delivered Pan Wales under the Food Innovation Wales brand.

- Food Innovation
- Food Efficiency
- Food Strategy

The project was launched by the Cabinet Secretary in March 2017.

Project Helix has been very successful, and has helped embed a culture of innovation and technology support within the Welsh Food and Drink industry. Project Helix has won a number of awards, including overall project winner at the final RDP Awards. Cardiff Metropolitan University has been short-listed as one of the finalists for the best Knowledge Transfer Programme at the Times Higher Education Awards 2023.

Project Helix had a considerable positive impact on the Food & Drink Industry in Wales and has made a significant contribution through its achieved outputs in raising the profile of Welsh Food and Drink, in Wales, nationally across the UK and across the World, with staff providing technical expertise alongside numerous Welsh Government trade missions.

The most significant impact is that of culture change within the Food and Drink Industry. Project Helix has helped significant numbers of companies achieve the relevant accreditations that enable them to supply supermarkets and other routes to market, it has embedded a culture of innovations and technological advance across the industry.

During the Covid pandemic Project Helix technical support was critical to the manufacturing industry as a whole in Wales. The Food and Drink industry was piloted so that covid safety measures could be rolled out nationwide. Project Helix has truly proved its worth and from leading on manufacturing policy, health and safety and delivering significant impacts in several areas essential to business growth and Covid recovery.

New ways of working meant remote audits, transforming hospitality companies into food manufacturers, and completely adapting the product ranges offered by companies, such as hand gels, ventilators and

having enough food and drink daily essentials for the people of Wales. In addition, Project Helix was able to support the Welsh Government in the establishment of the Food Box scheme by providing detailed nutritional advice to support those who were shielding.

Project Helix was a large, complex project, that from the outset was very successful.

The **Cywain** project offered seamless provision for growth-oriented food and drink businesses, bringing together the successes of previous Cywain projects and the Fine Food and Drink Cluster. The Cywain project began in June 2018 and came to an end in 2023. Menter a Busnes have in July 2023 been able to continue and adapt the project under the SIS scheme and project title Enterprise for Success, which is currently being delivered on behalf of Food and Drink Wales.

Looking at the 2018-2023 project, the project supported:

- start-ups (businesses under two years of age) and small businesses that demonstrate growth potential, account managing SMEs and offering targeted interventions
- businesses of all sizes that want to cluster together and collaborate or establish groups of special interest to address specific business issues that affect the growth of their business and the sector as a whole.

The 2018-2023 period was a significantly challenging period for SME's and continues to be in 2024, but notably the impact of Brexit, the Global Covid-19 pandemic and more recently rising costs on businesses was particularly challenging. Despite this, with Cywain's support many food and drink producers were able to flourish and develop.

the Cywain project has resulted in the creation of its clients creating 266 FTE jobs in the sector in Wales. This equates to 330 people employed directly as a result of the work the project has done with clients. In addition to this, a workforce of 5,482 people has been safeguarded as a result of the support.

During the lifetime of the project, Cywain has given support and intervention tailored to meet the needs of clients and market demands on a regular basis.

**COVID-19** saw a significant shift in delivery to meet needs of clients / pivoting etc. This included a large piece of work in getting businesses digital-ready in order to shift to online markets, and for us shifting to delivery in a 100% paperless and digital way.

Cywain has provided a total of 1.317 training days totalling 10,536 hours for 983 participants, of which 528 were female, 389 were male and 66 preferred not to answer or did not answer.

The COVID-19 pandemic's impacts have been felt by many food and drink producers in Wales and in addition to this, Brexit / labour shortage in the sector and rising costs continue to be a significant challenge to the industry. In 2022, the war in Ukraine and subsequent rising fuel and electricity costs significantly impacted the clients that Cywain and the clusters worked with

Cywain have provided hands on support to clients throughout this period, and to many, offered a lifeline when their businesses were under threat.

**FOOD SKILLS CYMRU** is a project that aims to develop skills within food businesses as a key component of the supply chain in serving and selling Welsh. The project was awarded a 12 month up until



31st March 2023.

A total of 103 business were supported in this project and 705 beneficiaries completed a training course.

During this project period Lantra processed and approved 240 funding applications with 927 people approved to complete training amounting to £259,394.46 of funding being approved and ringfenced. Not all training was completed due to businesses not being able to complete the training within the 12 month project timeframe.

A workstream within FSC is Wales a Food Destination. This project promotes and increases the use of Welsh food and drink products within the tourism sector. 53 businesses were supported within the final 12 month period.

Collaboration with Cywain, Project Helix and the Clusters took place during the project with client referrals moving between the different programmes to ensure that businesses were receiving the correct provision of support.

**TYFU CYMRU (LANTRA)** was a collaborative project which brought key stakeholders and commercial horticultural businesses together to stimulate environmental and economic horticultural productivity in Wales.

A project that was focused on building the skills necessary to enhance the capability and capacity of the industry. The external evaluation report states that the project has had an important role in developing an understanding of the sector in Wales with more than 400 commercial horticulturalists identified and collated on a database, representing the most comprehensive sector mapping process to have been undertaken.

**TYFU'R DYFODOL - (National Botanic Gardens of Wales)** aims to encourage people within Wales to grow more food. To the end of 2023 €2.37m of grant has been paid against a total expected expenditure of €2.7m.

By the end of 2023, a cumulative total of €55.79m expenditure was incurred across Measure 1.1 under this Focus Area, of which €12.35m was in 2023 alone..

## **Measure 4.2**

Measure 4.2 is delivered under Focus Area 3a of the Programme, through the Food Business Investment Scheme. FBIS is an important element of the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014-2020. It is designed to help primary producers of agricultural products in Wales to add value to their outputs by providing support to those businesses that do first and/or second stage processing activities. It is also designed to improve the performance and competitiveness of their businesses; to respond to consumer demand; to encourage diversification and to identify, exploit and service new emerging and existing markets.

FBIS has been a great success, with over €214m new capital projects developed, in Wales. This demonstrates our pro-business approach to the awarding of grant funding.

The Food Business Investment Scheme is now closed. It is reported that -

- 109 businesses were directly supported, with a total grant award of €61.50m.

By the end of December 2023, a cumulative total of €61.50m in expenditure has been incurred through the FBIS, of which €15.42m was during 2023.

## Measure 16.1

### European Innovation Partnership

Please see focus area 1A for delivery information on EIP. However, 55.5 EIP operations were supported and a cumulative spend of £0.27m has been recorded against 3A.

## Measure 16.2

### Innovative Approaches & Collaborative Growing

The Welsh Government committed to supporting a Green Recovery in Wales which safeguards the environment and allows our rural economy to thrive.

As part of the Covid Recovery, this EOI round was opened to encourage and stimulate innovative approaches in the horticulture sector, combining technical support and collaborative opportunities in order to:

- Support and create further diversity to **increase the resilience of the rural economy.**
- Support **innovative approaches and collaboration.**
- Strengthen and develop **local supply chains.**
- Accelerate the **transition towards a low carbon economy.**

The aim of this EOI round was to provide support for cross-sector collaborative approaches with a range of stakeholders at the right scale to achieve multiple objectives and outcomes through “making new things happen”.

To overcome some of the challenges this EOI round aims to increase the number of commercial collaborative growing ventures to develop and sustain local supply chains in rural areas, using the latest technology to overcome modern day needs for convenience and ease of access.

The Welsh Government is committed to enabling a Green Recovery so all project proposals should include sustainability criteria to track how the Covid-19 Recovery actions also contribute to long term resilience by addressing climate change and ecological transition.

Five contracts with a value of €2.1m were awarded under this window.

Some of the achievements of this Co-operation and Supply Chain Development Scheme are as follows: -

- 834 stakeholders were engaged throughout the lifetime of the operations,
- 232 individuals participated in training
- 5 networks were established,
- 9.4 jobs were created and a further 1.48 jobs were safeguarded.

## **Measure 16.4**

The Co-operation and Supply Chain Development Scheme (C&SCDS) delivered under Measure 16 provides a broad range of support. The scheme aims to support the development of new products, practices, processes and technologies in the agriculture, forestry and food and hospitality sectors (except for fisheries or aquaculture products), and other actors that contribute to achieving the objectives and priorities of rural development policy including:

- small businesses working together to share production facilities and resources.
  - short supply chains and local markets including promotion activities in a local context.
  - pilot projects where the information is made publicly available and widely disseminated.
- The scheme supports collaboration and is designed to make new things happen, achieving transformational change. By the end of December 2023, a cumulative total of €3.39m was spent under Measure 16.4, focus area 3D with four operations supported. The total number of holdings participating in supported schemes under measure 16.4 was 184, exceeding the programme target of 165 holdings.

## **Food Tourism**

The Coronavirus pandemic, together with EU Transition, has presented many challenges for the rural economy due to its reliance on micro and small enterprises in the agriculture and food hospitality / tourism sectors.

During the height of the pandemic the small/micro enterprises demonstrated the significant value and quality of product available at a local and regional level. This has shown that consumers are developing to purchase local produce/crafts and also online sales regionally are increasing.

As part of the rural recovery, opportunities were highlighted that need to be developed to overcome fragmentation and encourage food, craft and tourism to co-operate to create economics of scale to underpin the Nation Brand Cymru values.

This intervention aimed to kick start the food and visitor economy of Wales through co-operation and collaboration activities related to Food Tourism, principally to encourage greater linkages between the sectors and improve take up of local sourcing. The aims would be to raise the profile of Wales as a Food destination, develop a range of communication methods targeted at raising awareness and providing information on Welsh Food and Drink to the tourism industry and visitors to Wales. Developing partnership initiatives designed to encourage greater collaboration between food, craft and tourism sectors, to ensure a consistent approach and reduced duplication.

The Welsh Government is committed to enabling a Green Recovery so all project proposals should include sustainability criteria to track how the Covid-19 Recovery actions also contribute to long term resilience by addressing climate change and ecological transition.

One contract valued at €578,823 was awarded during 2022. Delivery was completed by June 2023.

Achievements of this scheme include:

- 500 stakeholders engaged,
- 41 participants in training over 6 training days.

### **Performance Framework Indicators Under Priority 3**

The performance framework indicators that fall under priority 3 can be seen below. We have significantly overachieved against a number of these.

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Achieved</b>	<b>Percentage Achieved</b>
3	Total public expenditure	€ 123.73	€ 124.81	100.88%
3	Number of holdings supported	165	638	386.67%
3	Number of operations supported	120	109	91%

### **PRIORITY 4:**

#### **FOCUS AREAS 4a, 4b, 4c**

Measures 1, 2, 4.4, 8, 10, 11 and 16 are programmed under Priority 4. Please see Priority 1 section above for information on Measures 1 (Knowledge Transfer) and 2 (Advisory Services) Farming Connect delivery and also Measure 16.1 (EIP) during the reporting period.

Under Priority 4, a cumulative total of €476.56m was incurred by the end of 2023.

Regarding achievement against Target Indicators under Priority 4 of the Programme by the end of 2023 the percentage realised against 'forest / other woodland area under management contracts supporting biodiversity' (indicator T8) was 0.37%, absolute value of 1,154.41 against a baseline value of 311,050 ha for forest and other woodlanded land (FOWL) in Wales. Achievement for Indicator T9 'percentage of agri land under management contracts supporting biodiversity and / or landscapes' was 47.83%, absolute value of 680,730.39 against a baseline of 1,423,910 of Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA) in Wales. Achievement for T10 'percentage of agri land under management contracts to improve water management' was 6.16%, absolute value of 87,763.55 against a baseline of 1,423,910 UAA in Wales. For Indicator T12 'percentage of agri land under management contracts to improve soil management and / or prevent soil erosion' was 4.66%, absolute value of 66,292.28 against a baseline of 1,423,910 UAA in Wales by the end of 2023.

Measures programmed under specific Focus Areas under Priority 4 include;

- Focus Area 4A (agriculture): Measure 8.1 (afforestation / creation of woodland), 8.2 (establishment and maintenance of agro-forestry systems) and 10.1 (Agri-environment-Climate)
- Focus Area 4A (forestry): Measure 8.5 (investments improving resilience and environmental value of forest ecosystems)
- Focus Area 4B (agriculture): Measure 8.1 (afforestation / creation of woodland), 8.2 (establishment and maintenance of agro-forestry systems) and 10.1 (Agri-environment-Climate)
- Focus Area 4B (forestry): activity against this Focus Area was removed as part of the second programme amendment.
- Focus Area 4C (agriculture): Measure 8.1 (afforestation / creation of woodland), 8.2 (establishment and maintenance of agro-forestry systems), 11.1 (convert to organic farming practices and methods)

and 11.2 (maintain organic farming practices and methods)

## **Glastir**

Woodland creation and agro-forestry, woodland restoration and management, agri-environment and organic support provided under Measures 2.1, 8.1, 8.2, 8.4 & 8.5, 4.4, 10.1 and 11.1 & 11.2, was delivered through the WG's sustainable land management scheme, Glastir, through the following:

- Glastir Entry (legacy), Advanced and Small Grants (Measures 4.4 & 10.1) - Focus Areas 4A, 4B, 5D and 5E.
- Glastir Commons (Measure 10.1) - Focus Area 4A.
- Glastir Organic (Measure 11) - Focus Area 4C.
- Glastir Woodland Creation (Measures 8.1 & 8.2) - Focus Areas 4A, 4B, and 5E.
- Glastir Woodland Management (legacy), Forest Management Plans and Restoration - Focus Areas 4A, 5C, 5E and 6A.
- Glastir advisory support (Measure 2.1) – Focus Area 4A, 4B, 4C, 5D and 5E.

Progress against Measure 1.1 (Vocational training), Measure 2.1 (support to help benefiting from the use of advisory services), Measure 4.4 (non productive investments linked to agri-environment-climate objectives), Measure 8 (Investments in forest area development), Measure 10.1 (Agri-environment-climate), Measure 11 (Organic Farming), Measure 16.5 (joint action to mitigating or adapting to climate change and for joint approaches to environmental projects and ongoing environmental practices) along with Measure 16.8 (forest management plans) has been provided below;

## **Measure 1.1**

### **Focus on Forestry First –**

Focus on Forestry First under Measure 1.1 aimed to deliver transformational change to the timber sector through a professional skilled workforce by;

- Business Planning – training plans and access to further business management courses; Skills Development – funded training to raise the skills of the sector; Professional Pathways – enable and promote higher level qualifications
- Knowledge Transfer - raise background knowledge and understanding in the workforce; Mentoring – provide a framework to access mentoring within the sector; Innovative Training Solutions – develop and publish old or new resources to maintain access to traditional skills and underpin new techniques and technology.

By the end of 2023, €4.23m had been paid towards the Focus on Forestry project alone. Achievements by the end of December 2023 for this project included:

- 11,561 participants supported,
- 4,363 participants in training,
- 17,493 training days received,
- 7 jobs created under Forest Focus First.

The high level of interest in registering with FFF Ltd to access funding has been maintained. This demonstrates that there is still a need for support towards training and development in the trees and timber

sector.

FFF Ltd continued to work closely with Training Providers to provide information on the demand for courses and place as many beneficiaries as possible onto courses to achieve their training outcomes.

The **SMS Support Service**, under measure 1.1 delivers against P4 and is designed to enable and encourage new collaborations and partnerships to develop project ideas and apply to the remaining windows for the SMS.

The SMS Support Service focused on supporting farmers, foresters and other land managers to develop new project ideas and form new collaborative groups so they were able to submit an EOI to the Sustainable Management Scheme.

The service also provided support to projects invited to the second stage of application to help them continue to define the governance around their collaborations and facilitate the development of the full project plans.

To the end of 2023, €0.73m€732,500.02 had been paid to the SMS Support Service project. Achievements to the end of 2023 included:

1,239 training days given to 521 participants in training.

By the end of 2023 a cumulative total of €8.49m had been spent under Measure 1, priority 4, of which €4.88m was spent through Sub measure 1.1, Priority 4.

## **Measure 2.1**

In addition under Measure 2.1 Glastir uses advisory support to have water management plans carried out and woodland plans verified against the UK Forestry Standard by Natural Resources Wales;

Through Measure 2 funding, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) on behalf of the WG have provided a Verification Service of the Glastir Forest Management Plans submitted to the WG by its own group of Glastir Registered Woodland Planners.

NRW's verification project has supported the:

- Verification of **384** Glastir Woodland Creation (GWC) plans (rounds 7 to 11 inclusive), **2** Woodland Creation Planning Pilot Scheme plans and **46** Woodland Creation Planning Scheme plans to date totalling **432** plans that comply with past and the very latest edition of The United Kingdom Forestry Standard (UKFS) dated July 2017.
- Supporting the creation of over **2,200 hectares (ha)** of new woodland creation in Wales over the last 5 years.
- Verification of **74 Glastir Woodland Restoration (GWR)** schemes on Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) sites (rounds 7 to 9 inclusive of the scheme and **25 Woodland Restoration Scheme (WRS)** plans, of which 19 were on PAWS, that again comply with UKFS and felling licence terms and conditions.

In addition through Measure 20.1 Technical Assistance (TA) funding, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) on behalf of the WG provided the management and oversight required for the Verification Service of Glastir

Forest Management Plans submitted to the WG by its own group of Glastir Registered Woodland Planners.

Glastir required the expertise of Wales' archaeological trusts to give advice on the suitable design for Glastir Woodland Creation projects, through the provision of archaeological advice for applications received and assessment of applications to ensure activities included in a Glastir contract do not damage or have an adverse impact on the historic environment. This also included a provision for general advice to be provided for Glastir Entry, Glastir Commons and Glastir Woodland Management in previous years.

By the end of December 2023, a cumulative total of €3.41m was spent through Measure 2.1 under Priority 4 supporting 828.44 actions, and 1,634 beneficiaries. The above NRW operations contributes to these overall figures.

#### **Measure 4.4**

Investments contributing toward Focus Area 4a and 4b objectives are provided through capital works in Glastir Advanced and Glastir Small Grants under Measure 4.4. In **Glastir Advanced**, the capital works are assigned the Focus Area they deliver against. For example, a fence protecting a Glastir Advanced hay meadow commitment in Measure 10.1 was assigned Focus Area 4a as the hay meadow commitment is Focus Area 4a, a fence protecting a streamside corridor commitment in Glastir Advanced would be assigned Focus Area 4b, as the streamside corridor is Focus Area 4b.

The capital works element of the **Glastir Advanced** scheme is delivered under Measure 4.4 (non-productive investments linked to agri-environment-climate objectives) alongside Measure 10.1 for Glastir Advanced. By end of December 2023, there was €55.88m in cumulative expenditure for 9,804 ongoing operations under Priority Area 4.

For **Glastir Small Grants (GSG)**, the Focus Area is assigned according to the theme for the individual round of Glastir Small Grants. The Carbon theme is assigned to Focus Area 5e, the Water theme against Focus Area 4b and the Landscape and Pollinators theme to Focus Area 4a. There have been nine EOI rounds of GSG to date.

By the end of 2023 there were 9,804 contracts for Glastir Capital Works (CW) operations under Measure 4.4 with €55.88m cumulative expenditure incurred.

#### **Measure 8.1 and 8.2**

Schemes delivered under Measure 8.1 include legacy contracts under 2007-13 Forestry schemes and also Glastir Woodland Creation under both Measures 8.1 (support for afforestation / creation of woodland) and 8.2 (support for establishment and maintenance of agro-forestry systems). Total cumulative expenditure for Measure 8.1 under priority 4 was €14.2m by the end of 2023, and €0.003m for measure 8.2 during 2023 under this Focus Area.

#### **Measure 8.3**

The Forest Monitoring & Risk Management Scheme is delivered under Measure 8.3 (prevention of damage to forests) by Natural Resources Wales (NRW). The objective of the Scheme was to support monitoring, mitigation and prevention of harmful results from current tree or woodland environment pest or disease outbreaks. This scheme's funding is linked to Priority 4.

Under sub measure 8.3, priority 4, a total spend of €0.32 (Finance) / €0.15m.(SFC) has been incurred over

the lifetime of the programme, of which €0.15m relates to 2023.

The details relating to this submeasure have been completed in table B3, however, there is no option within table B1 to include performance data for 8.3.

### **Measure 8.5**

The Glastir Woodland Management (GWM – 8.5) scheme includes only legacy contracts from the previous 2007-2013 Programme and is paid through Measure 8.5 (support for investments improving resilience and environmental value of forest eco-systems) for capital payments and Measure 10.1 (agri-environment climate) for multi-annual, area-based payments. The last contract year for GWM was 2019.

By December 2023, €19.68m had been spent under measure 8, priority 4, supporting 743 operations, and 480 holdings / beneficiaries were supported. Of this, €5.17m spend related to sub measure 8.5, supporting 577 operations and 4,291.75 ha.

### **Measures 10 & 11**

Measures 10 and 11 were closed to new contracts in 2023. All Glastir Advanced contracts, including underlying Glastir Entry elements, where they were in place, all current Glastir Commons agreements and all current Glastir Organics contracts were extended to 31 December 2023, to aid the transition between current schemes and the new land management schemes post Brexit. This approach helped maintain environmental outcomes during the interim period and ensure continued support for organic farmers. It assisted the industry in facing the upcoming challenges of Brexit, alongside the immediate and ongoing problems associated with agricultural pollution. Importantly, as well, the extensions helped farmers to seamlessly transition to other sustainable land management schemes.

### **Measure 10**

Delivery under Measure 10.1 (Agri-environment-Climate) included Glastir Advanced, including any underlying Entry commitments, and Commons schemes. During the reporting period, there were 2,318 operations supported under priority area 4 for Measure 10.1. In 2023 a total of €67.88m had been paid under M10.1 priority 4. This figure includes actual annual spend of €64.19m, along with historic payments that haven't previously been captured. The cumulative total public expenditure spend is €326.97m for M10.1, P4.

The last standalone Glastir Entry contracts reached their five-year contract period in December 2019, having commenced in 2015. Only where Glastir Entry (GE) contracts underpin Glastir Advanced contracts, can their commitments carry on beyond their initial contract period, as and when the overlying Glastir Advanced contract is renewed or extended. GE has achieved a total of 4,603 contracts, amounting to a total area of 543,496 ha. No further Entry contract offers were made as the Welsh Government considered more targeted interventions, such as those in Glastir Advanced and Glastir Small Grants, were more appropriate to achieve its objectives.

Glastir Advanced contract holders who's initial 5-year contract ended on 31 December 2022 were offered a renewal, whilst those whose contract has previously been renewed were offered an extension until 31 December 2023. Rural Payments Wales (RPW) issued contracts worth €25.3m (£24.7774m), of which, contracts totalling €25.3m were accepted (£24.7m)

Glastir Commons was programmed entirely under Priority 4, Focus Area 4a, and was closed to new



entrants. The 180 Glastir Commons contract holders whose existing contract ended on 31 December 2022 were offered an extension until 31 December 2023. 177 contracts covering 114,798.35ha of land accepted an extension. All eligible contracts were offered an extension to December 2023. 178 accepted the offer. The extended contracts were worth €6.1m.

### **Measures 11**

The Glastir Organic Scheme under Measure 11 supported farmers to convert to organic production (Measure 11.1) or maintain organic farming practices (Measure 11.2). There were three windows to apply for this Scheme under the 2014-2020 RDP. Although this Scheme was closed and no further windows were planned during this Programme, annual extensions to 31 December 2023 were offered to existing contract holders.

The Welsh Government offered 469 contract extensions worth €3.80m to eligible Glastir Organic beneficiaries to 31 December 2023. 456 beneficiaries have accepted an extension offer worth €3.68m.

There were 471 active contracts in place at the end of 2023 covering a total area of 55,688ha all under Measure 11.2. In year expenditure of €6.85m was achieved at the end of 2023 bringing cumulative expenditure to date under Measure 11 to €37.22m, the majority of which was for maintenance under Measure 11.2.

### **Measure 16.1**

Please see focus area 1A for delivery information on EIP. A total of 166.5 operations have been supported under priority 4, with a cumulative spend of €0.82m.

### **Measure 16.5**

The Sustainable Management Scheme (SMS) was delivered by the Welsh Government Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, which was funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Welsh Government. This scheme supports direct action on managing natural resources across Wales delivering against the approach and principles laid down in the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 & the Well-being of future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The SMS required a collaborative approach rather than single applicants to develop proposals for projects with a two-three-year delivery phase. The purpose of the SMS was to support collaborative landscape scale projects delivering nature-based solutions to improve the resilience of our natural resources and ecosystems in a way that also delivers benefits to farm businesses and the health and well-being of rural communities. SMS projects undertook actions to enhance biodiversity; improve green infrastructure; sustain better land and water management and importantly, facilitate climate change adaptation and mitigation at landscape scale.

SMS collaborations include landowners, farmers and graziers who have seen the benefits working together can bring and being inspired to work with new and traditional methods. Projects involve partnerships and collaborations at a local level and landscape scale offering nature-based solutions to tackle the decline in biodiversity and to improve the resilience of our ecosystems.

Enabling collaboration at the right scale (be that site, regional, catchment landscape or ecosystem) and the right locations was vital to tackling issues and maximising benefits.

The SMS was designed to meet RDP Focus Area 4: Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems dependent on agriculture and forestry by restoring and preserving biodiversity, including Natura 2000 areas and high nature value farming, and the state of European landscapes. Improving water & soil management and carbon sequestration in agriculture and forestry.

At the end of the delivery period, June 2023, we saw actions that contributed to very clear outcomes; increased Carbon Sequestration, increased Biodiversity, improved natural flood risk management, soil health & water quality all through these collaborative landscape scale catchment management projects. Also an increase in tree planting and management of our existing woodlands supporting the commitments to the national forest. All the actions contributed to the wider need for Climate Change Adaptation and to improve our Ecosystem Resilience through the sustainable management of our natural resources.

We saw additional outcomes in skills development, job creation and the retention of Rural Skills, Heritage & Welsh Language. Several projects who considered and focused on health and well-being benefits of their work such as supporting community cohesion and community led local development have shown outcomes in increased nature connectiveness, mental health and physical activity progress of their participants.

SMS aimed to support people and places by taking a place-based approach, with a key approach of not just 'what' we do, but how we do it. They drew on the experience of people in their places, working with each other to develop new solutions and making sure that everyone benefits directly from our natural resources. There are several pilot innovative approaches that have been developed through the funding to inform future policy and the outputs and learning from these projects will be used as part of the evidence base in developing future support schemes in Wales.

Examples of actions on the ground delivered by the 50 projects across Wales and details of each project can be found in the Sustainable Management Scheme project booklet Sustainable Management Scheme

During the reporting period five EOI windows opened for SMS.

A total of €24.03m expenditure has been claimed up to December 2023 under Measure 16.5, Priority 4.

Case level indicator targets across the 50 supported operations, with a further 98 cooperations operations recorded at a lower level.

Area of peatland habitat re-wetted - 99.94ha

Area of Upland restored to improve carbon retaining condition – 46ha

Area of existing woodland supported target– existing 2651.02ha and new 549.44ha

Enterprises assisted target - 368

Managed access to countryside or coast - 1143km

Number of actions to utilise natural resources for health benefit - 1419

Number of feasibility studies - 68

Number of individuals gaining a qualification -76

Number of jobs created - 46.2

Number of jobs safeguarded - 22

Number of micro small and medium sized enterprises supported - 578

Number of networks established - 76

Number of new markets accesses - 3

Number of participants in training - 1999

Number of pilot activities undertaken / supported - 146

Number of stakeholders engaged - 9168

Number of training days - 718

The 50 top level operations were Pan Wales and covered 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 supported this habitat and looked at recreation, supporting tourism and the health and well-being benefits of nature for our communities.

### **Target Indicator**

T8 – percentage of forest/other wooded area under management contracts supporting biodiversity (focus area 4A), at the end of 2023, the achievement was 0.37% (absolute value of 1,154.41). The target for this indicator is 2.7%, absolute value of 8,400. Within Section 3 of this report we have provided reasoning for this underachievement. And justification for the low achievement numbers.

### **Performance Framework Indicators (under Priority 4)**

With regards to our programmed performance framework indicators under priority 4, below is the progress made to end of the programme period, December 2023.

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Achieved</b>	<b>Percentage Achieved</b>
<b>P4</b>	Total public expenditure	€470.38m	€421.30m	89.57%
<b>P4</b>	Total area (ha) supported	706,387	1,250,853.70	177.08%

### **PRIORITY 5**

Measures 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 10 and 16 are programmed under Priority 5. Focus Area 5A has not been activated as part of the Wales Programme.

Please see Priority 1 section above for information on Farming Connect delivery of Measures 1 (Knowledge Transfer) and 2 (Advisory Services) and also Measure 16.1 (EIP) during the reporting period. Also see Priority 3 and Priority 6 sections for information on Measure 16 (Co-operation), Priority 2 for Measure 4.1 activity, Priority 4 for Measures 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5 and 10.1 delivery also Priority 6 for Measure 7 (Basic Services and village renewal).

During 2023 expenditure incurred against Priority 5 totalled €11.23m bring total cumulative expenditure under P5 to €66.75m. The highest cumulative spend was under Measure 4 (€27.04m), Measure 10 (€16.21m) and Measure 8 (€15.54m) by the end of 2023.

Regarding achievement against Target Indicators under Priority 5 of the Programme for Indicator T15 ‘total investment for energy efficiency’ a cumulative total of €15.26m was achieved by the end of 2023. For Indicator T18 ‘percentage of agri land under management contracts targeting reduction of GHG and / or ammonia emissions’ achievement was 6.35% (90,364.13 absolute value) against a baseline of 1,423,910 UAA in Wales by the end of 2023. For Indicator T19 ‘percentage of agri and forest land under management contracts contributing to carbon sequestration and conservation’ achievement by the end of 2023 was 0.13% (2,296.62 absolute value) against a baseline of 1,734,960 total agri and forest land area in Wales.

Specific Measures programmed under Priority 5 include;

- Focus Area 5B: Measure 4.1 (investments in agricultural holdings) – *see Priority 2 section above for Measure 4.1,*
- Focus Area 5C: Measures 7.2 (investments of small scale infrastructure including renewable energy), 8.5 (improving resilience and environmental value of forest ecosystems), and 8.6 (investments for forest technologies), 16.6 and 16.8 (Support for drawing up of forest management plans or equivalent instruments)–*see Priority 4 section above for Measure 8.5 and 16.8*
- Focus Area 5D: Measures 4.1, 4.4 (non-productive investments linked to agri-environment-climate objectives), 10.1 (agri-environment-climate) – *See Priority 2 section for Measure 4.1, Priority 4 for Measure 4.4 and 10.1.*
- Focus Area 5E: Measures 4.4, 8.1 (support for afforestation / woodland creation), 8.2 (establishment / maintenance of agro-forestry systems), 8.3 (prevention of damage to forests), , 8.4 (support for restoration of damage to forests from forest fires and natural disasters and catastrophic events), 8.5 (support for investments improving resilience and environmental value of forest ecosystems), 10.1 (agri-environment-climate) and 16.8 (Support for drawing up of forest management plans) – *see Priority 4 section above for Measures 4.4, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5 and 16.8.*

## **FOCUS AREA 5B**

Please see Priority 1 section above for information on Farming Connect delivery of Measures 1 (Knowledge Transfer) and 2 (Advisory Services) and also Measure 16.1 (EIP) during the reporting period. Under Focus Area 5b a total of €7.59m has been paid, of this €0.23m was during 2023.

### **Measure 4.1**

The Sustainable Production Grant (SPG) under Measure 4.1 provides support to help farmers improve the economic and environmental performance of their agricultural holding in line with the WG’s and agriculture industry in Wales’ vision for more sustainable, profitable and resilient farm businesses. The Farm Business Grant Scheme (FBG) programmed under Measure 4.1 aims to help farmers in Wales to

improve the economic and environmental performance of their agricultural holdings. In total, Measure 4.1 under Focus Area 5b had supported 1,676 holdings, with €6.10m cumulative expenditure incurred by the end of 2023. See Priority 2 section of this report for more information on Measure 4.1, also Focus Area 5d below.

### **Measure 16.1**

55.5 EIP operations have been supported under this focus area, with a cumulative spend of €0.27m.

## **FOCUS AREA 5C**

Please see Priority 1 section above for information on Farming Connect delivery of Measures 1 (Knowledge Transfer) and 2 (Advisory Services) and also Measure 16.1 (EIP) during the reporting period. Under Focus Area 5c a total of €3.06m had been paid by end 2023, of which €0.32m was in 2023.

### **Measure 4.3**

Measure 4.3 was to have been delivered through the ‘Farm and Forestry Infrastructure Scheme, however, this scheme was never launched. As such there was no activity or spend during 2023. The scheme was deemed undeliverable in 2019. The money was removed from this sub measure as part of the last modification in 2023.

### **Measure 7**

Measure 7 was delivered via the WG operated grant scheme called the Rural Community Development Fund (RCDF). Under RCDF the WG offered grants for eligible interventions designed to prevent and mitigate the impact of poverty in rural communities improving conditions which can lead to future jobs and growth. Measure 7 is delivered under three Focus Areas: 5c, 6b and 6c with the majority of the financial allocation for the Measure programmed under Focus Area 6b. See Focus Area 6b for Measure 7.1, 7.4, 7.5, 7.6 & 7.7.

See Focus Area 6c for Measure 7.3 (broadband infrastructure).

The three objectives of RCDF are to:

1. Promote social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas.
2. Help those most deprived in rural Wales and those that have limited scope to change their circumstances
3. Develop the resilience and capability of rural communities so that they are better able to cope with and adapt to change.

Applicants to RCDF were expected to discuss their proposals with their LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs) before submitting their EOI(s) to the WG for appraisal. The LEADER LAGs were therefore a key part of the “pipeline” for EOIs to enter the RCDF Scheme. The work of the LAGs to engage stakeholders, animate the territory, build capacity, pilot potential solutions to barriers/ways to maximise opportunities would lead to the identification of project proposals which require investment funding. Once the idea has been sufficiently developed an EOI would be submitted to RCDF.

It became apparent, however, that the result of this Community-led Local Development (CLLD) approach reflects the experience under the LEADER Measure in that far fewer project proposals came forward naturally in relation to broadband or to energy saving and community-based renewable energy generation. The WG discussed with the CLLD Consultation Group the possibility of having EOI Rounds

targeted only at Measure 7.2 (Renewable Energy and Energy Saving) and Measure 7.3 (Broadband Infrastructure). Subsequently an EOI Round was held in 2018 targeting these two Measures.

Since the start of the scheme in late 2015 there have been a total of seven RCDF EOI rounds. Please see Priority 6 section below for more information on Measure 7 and the Rural Community Development Fund. No Expression of Interest Rounds were held under the Rural Community Development Fund during 2021 or 2022. The scheme was closed for new applications and the remaining funds under this sub measure were moved to performing measures through earlier modifications.

In total, Measure 7 under Focus Area 5c had supported 4 operations with €0.32m cumulative expenditure incurred by the end of 2023.

### **Measure 8.5**

The Glastir Woodland Management (GWM) Scheme includes only legacy contracts from the previous 2007-2013 RDP and is paid through Measure 8.5 (support for investments improving resilience and environmental value of forest ecosystems) for capital payments and Measure 10.1 (agri-environment climate) for multi-annual, area-based payments. There were no operations, expenditure or land supported under FA 5c for this Measure during the reporting period, as the second Programme amendment approved during 2019 removed Measure 8.5 from Focus Area 5c. Please see Priority 4 & Focus Area 5e sections for further information on Measure 8.5.

### **Measure 8.6**

Measure 8.6 is delivered under Focus Areas 5c and 6a of the Programme through the Timber Business Investment Scheme (TBIS). TBIS provides funding for capital investments that add value to forests by enabling woodland management activities, timber harvesting and / or timber processing. The scheme was open to private forest owners, local authorities, certain other public sector forest owners and small/medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and community organisations or forestry contractors.

By the end of December 2023 18 operations were supported, with €1.33m cumulative expenditure for this measure against Focus area 5c, of which €0.32m occurred in 2023.

The 18 operations under the Timber Business Investment Scheme supported under focus area 5c included foresters, contractors and farmers investing in harvesting and firewood capital equipment to establish or expand their forestry / timber enterprises.

All Projects | Business Wales - Business Wales (gov.wales) This interactive map highlights all the operations that have been supported via the Rural Development Programme.

We have noted that there is low performance in terms of the number of operations supported and total expenditure for Measure 8.6, which is related to the Timber Business Investment Scheme.

The Scheme reports against two Focus Areas, 5C (renewable energy and the bio-economy) and 6A (Job creation). When the original targets were set, a larger number of operations were expected under Focus Area 5C than 6A. EOI windows were open to both Focus Areas and the balance of successful EOIs favoured Focus Area 6A. We have overachieved on our operations supported target for 6A

### **Measure 16.1**

55.5 EIP operations have been supported under this focus area, with a cumulative spend of €0.27m.

### **Measure 16.2, 16.6 & 16.9**

Measure 16.2 (support for pilot projects and for the development of new products, practises, processes and technologies) is delivered as part of the Co-operation and Supply Chain Development Scheme (C&SCD) and is programmed under Focus Area 5c. Further information on Measure 16 C&SCD can be found in Priority 3, 5 and 6 of this report.

Measure 16.6 (support for cooperation among supply chain actors for sustainable provision of biomass for use in food and energy production and industrial processes) and Measure 16.9 (support for diversification of farming activities into activities concerning health care, social integration, community-supported agriculture and education about the environment and food) were never opened as part of the Wales Rural Development Programme.

### **FOCUS AREA 5D**

Please see Priority 1 section above for information on Farming Connect delivery of Measures 1 (Knowledge Transfer) and 2 (Advisory Services) and also Measure 16.1 (EIP) during the reporting period. Under Focus Area 5d, a total of €34.37m had been paid by end 2023, of which €7.23m was in 2023. Of the cumulative expenditure, the majority was under Measure 4 (€17.54m) and Measure 10.1 (€13.90m).

### **Measure 4.1**

The Sustainable Production Grant (SPG) and the Farm Business Grant Scheme (FBG) are programmed under Measure 4.1 (support for investments in agricultural holdings) providing support to agricultural holding in line with the WG's and agriculture industry in Wales' vision for more sustainable, profitable and resilient farm businesses. There were 1,456 operations and 1,806 holdings / beneficiaries supported with €16.3m in cumulative expenditure incurred in respect of this Measure under Focus Area 5d, of which €4.10m was incurred during 2023. Please see Priority 2 section of this report for more information on Measure 4.1 delivery.

### **Measure 4.4**

The capital works element of the Glastir Advanced scheme is delivered under Measure 4.4 (non-productive investments linked to agri-environment-climate objectives) alongside Measure 10.1 for Glastir Advanced. By end of December 2023, there was €1.18m in cumulative expenditure for 339 operations that delivered under Focus Area 5d. See Priority 4 section of this report for more information on Measure 4.4 and Glastir.

### **Measure 10.1**

Delivery under Measure 10.1 (Agri-environment-Climate) includes the Glastir Entry, Advanced and Commons schemes. It also includes multi-annual, area-based payments for existing farm woodlands in Glastir Woodland Management. See Priority 4 section above for information on these Schemes. During the reporting period there were 339 contracts under Focus Area 5d for Measure 10.1.

By the end 2023, a total of €13.90m was paid under M10.1 FA 5d. See Priority 4 section of this report for more information on Measure 10.1 and Glastir Schemes.

## **Measure 16.1**

55.5 EIP operations have been supported under this focus area, with a cumulative spend of €0.27m.

## **FOCUS AREA 5E**

Please see Priority 1 section above for information on Farming Connect delivery of Measures 1 (Knowledge Transfer) and 2 (Advisory Services) and also Measure 16.1 (EIP) during the reporting period. Under Focus Area 5e a total of €21.75m (€3.41m during 2023) had been paid by end 2023.

## **Measure 2.1**

Under Measure 2.1 Glastir used advisory support to have water management plans carried out and woodland plans continue to be verified against the UK Forestry Standard by Natural Resources Wales (NRW). It also requires Wales' archaeological trusts to give advice on Glastir Woodland Creation projects, throughon suitable design. See Priority 4 section of this report for further information. In total, Measure 2.1 under Focus Area 5e had supported 80.9 operations, with €0.54m cumulative expenditure incurred by the end of 2023.

## **Measure 4.4**

The capital works element of the Glastir Advanced scheme is delivered under Measure 4.4 (non-productive investments linked to agri-environment-climate objectives) alongside Measure 10.1 for Glastir Advanced. By end of December 2023, under sub measure 4.4 there was €3.40m in cumulative expenditure for 2,087 ongoing operations under Focus Area 5e.

For Glastir Small Grants (GSG), the Focus Area is assigned according to the theme for the individual round of Glastir Small Grants. The Carbon theme is assigned to Focus Area 5e, the Water theme against Focus Area 4b and the Landscape and Pollinators theme to Focus Area 4a. There have been nine EOI rounds of GSG to date.

See Priority 4 section of this report for more information on Measure 4.4 and Glastir.

## **Measure 8.1 & 8.2**

Schemes delivered under Measure 8.1 include legacy contracts under 2007-13 RDP Forestry schemes and also Glastir Woodland Creation under both Measures 8.1 (support for afforestation / creation of woodland) and 8.2 (support for establishment and maintenance of agro-forestry systems). See Priority 4 section above for further information on these Schemes. Total cumulative expenditure for Measure 8.1 under Focus Area 5e, was €8.75m by the end of 2023. There has been no expenditure for Measure 8.2 during 2023 under this Focus Area.

## **Measure 8.4**

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*. There have been nine EOIs opened to date, with a total cumulative expenditure of €5.23m spent in the reporting period.



By the end of December 2023, a total of 1,538.36ha of woodland has been restocked, with 237 beneficiaries supported.

### **Measure 8.5**

The Glastir Woodland Management (GWM) Scheme includes only legacy contracts from the previous 2007-2013 RDP and is paid through Measure 8.5 (support for investments improving resilience and environmental value of forest ecosystems) for capital payments and Measure 10.1 (agri-environment climate) for multi-annual, area-based payments. There were no operations, expenditure or land supported under FA 5c for this Measure during the reporting period, as the second Programme amendment approved during 2019 removed Measure 8.5 from Focus Area 5c. Please see Priority 4 section for further information on Measure 8.5.

### **Measure 10.1**

Delivery under Measure 10.1 (Agri-environment-Climate) includes the Glastir Entry, Advanced and Commons schemes. It also includes multi-annual, area-based payments for existing farm woodlands in Glastir Woodland Management. See Priority 4 section above for information on these Schemes. During the reporting period there were 427 contracts covering 1,621.32ha under FA5e for Measure 10.1. By the end of 2023 a total of €2.31m in cumulative expenditure had been paid under M10.1 Focus Area 5e. See Priority 4 section of this report for more information on Measure 10 and Glastir.

### **Measure 16.1**

55.5 EIP operations have been supported under this focus area, with a cumulative spend of €0.27m.

### **Measure 16.8**

Measure 16.8 was delivered under Focus Area 5e through the Co-operative Forestry Planning Scheme. The Co-operative Forest Planning Scheme (CFPS) provided financial support for a range of activities 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. Eligible activities under this Measure could include the development and co-ordination of collaborative groups, communication and dissemination activities, technical and feasibility studies or monitoring and evaluation activities.

Throughout the programme period, €0.07m has been paid to one operation. The one supported operation funded via the Wales Rural Development Plan, further supports 2 coppoeration operations, as recorded.

### **Performance Framework Indicators (under Priority 5)**

With regards to our programmed performance framework indicators under priority 5, below is the programme achievements to the end of December 2023.

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Achieved</b>	<b>Percentage Achieved</b>
<b>5</b>	Total public expenditure	€ 64.16	€ 71.34	111.19%
<b>5</b>	Number of operations supported	583	1,089	186.79%

5	Total area (ha) supported 63,711	199,061.47	312.45%
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## **PRIORITY 6**

Measures 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 16 and 19 are programmed under Priority 6. Please see Priority 1 section above for information on Measures 1 (Knowledge Transfer) and 2 (Advisory Services) Farming Connect delivery and also Measure 16.1 (EIP) during the reporting period. Also see Priority 3 and Priority 5 sections for information on Measure 16 (Co-operation), Priority 4 for Measure 8 activity also Priority 5 for Measure 7 (Basic Services and village renewal).

The programme expenditure incurred under Priority 6 was at €196.49m.

Regarding achievement against Target Indicators under Priority 6 of the Programme for Indicator T20 ‘jobs created in supported projects’ a cumulative total of 20.2 was achieved against a target of 765 by the end of the programme. We have noted during the reporting year that this target indicator target of 765 is ambitious. Interrogation of the data has shown that the tourism schemes that were delivered under sub measure 6.4 had a final target of 705. The scheme has achieved 246 to date. 15.2 jobs (male) are recorded on SFC, 246 has been claimed but there has been no gender breakdown to enable us to report via SFC. Due to the pandemic, this measure was closed, and the remaining funds diverted to COVID recovery windows. Unfortunately, we were unable to ascertain the male / female breakdown of the jobs created under the tourism schemes. Other schemes and windows were opened that delivered to this focus area.

For Indicator T23 ‘jobs created in supported projects LEADER’ achievement by the end of the programme was 66.92 against a target of 100.

We have worked closely with the LAGS throughout the lifetime of the programme. We have met regularly with representatives, who have constantly forecast to achieve the targets. We have had no concerns that they would not achieve 100%.

However there have been a number of factors that have happened during the delivery period. Following Brexit, and its impact on labour and supply chains, seriously hampered this ambition to achieve 100 jobs created. In 2020, the COVID 19 pandemic significantly impacted resources across Wales, UK and Europe. A communication from the commission enabled Wales to ask the Local Action Groups to refresh their Local Development Strategies to meet the immediate emerging priorities. The focus shifted from jobs created to jobs safeguarded and secondly to providing valuable and essential access to services. We believe this was a period of innovation and leadership, strengthening local supply chains and the circular green economy, retaining monies in the local areas, the benefits of which are still visible today.

For Indicator T22 ‘percentage of rural population benefitting from improved services / infrastructures’ 3.46% (absolute value of 104,871) was achieved against a baseline of 3,034,975 net population by the end of 2023. The baseline population figure for this Target Indicator is 3,034,975, which represents the whole population of Wales, rather than the rural population of 1,381,745 that would have been eligible to benefit from RDP funding. On that basis we consider it is the rural population figure that should act as the baseline for this indicator. This came to light in 2022 when preparing to submit the 2021 AIR report. We were advised, at this point, to provide explanation and justification for this underperformance in the AIR narrative, Section 3 for 2021. The 104,871 absolute figure achieved relates to the RCDF scheme, under sub measures 7.1 to 7.7.

Measures programmed under Priority 6 include:

Focus Area 6a: Measures 6.4 (investments in creation / development of non-agricultural activities), 8.5 (improving resilience and environmental value of forest ecosystems), 8.6 (investments in forest technologies and forest products), 16.8 (Support for drawing up of forest management plans) and 16.9 (support for diversification of farming activities into activities concerning health care, social integration, community-supported agriculture and education about the environment and food)– *see also Priority 4 section above for Measures 8.5 and 8.6.*

Focus Area 6b: Measures 7 (Basic Services and village renewal - excluding 7.3 broadband infrastructure), 16.2 (pilot projects, development new products, practices, processes and technologies), 16.3 (co-operator among small operators in joint work processes, sharing facilities and resources and for developing / marketing tourism) and 19 (support for LEADER local development) *see also Priority 5 section above for Measure 7.*

Focus Area 6c: Measure 7.3 (broadband infrastructure)

### **FOCUS AREA 6A**

Please see Priority 1 section above for information on Measure 2 (Advisory Services) through Farming Connect during the reporting period. During the reporting period under Focus Area 6a a cumulative total of €16.23m had been paid, of which €1.84m was for activity undertaken during 2023.

#### **Measure 6.4**

There are three main Schemes delivered under Measure 6.4 (support for investments in creation and development of non-agricultural activities) relating to the Food and Drink sector, the Tourism sector and those wishing to diversify into non agricultural activities, as part of the COVID recovery suite of schemes. These were the main gaps identified in the original intervention logic in the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.

The breakdown of operations (O3) and holdings / beneficiaries (O4) supported for the schemes are as follows: -

RBIS (Food) – 9 operations supported, 26 holdings / beneficiaries supported

RBIS (NonAgri) – 10 operations supported, 23 holdings / beneficiaries supported

MSBF / Tourism – 1 operation supported, supporting a further 48 operations, 1 holdings / beneficiaries supported, supporting a further 48 operations

Number of operations supported – 20

Number of holdings/beneficiaries supported - 50

**The Rural Business Investment Scheme - FOOD (RBISF)** was a capital investments scheme to support projects that offer clear and quantifiable benefits to the food and drink industry in Wales. The €3.2m scheme was open to existing and start up micro & small food and drink processors and manufacturers throughout Wales.

This was a capital investment scheme for food and drink processing or manufacturing activities currently

not eligible under the Food Business Investment Scheme. The maximum grant for an individual investment project was 40% of the total eligible cost with a maximum of €0.06m for any individual investment project.

RBISF aimed to support 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

Through these EOI windows, RBISF supported 39 further 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. Whilst interest in the scheme was reasonable with 95 EOI's submitted over 7 windows, 64 invited to full application, only 35 submitted full applications.

This Scheme was re-opened on 18 February 2021 as part of the Covid Recovery suite of schemes. Seven applications were successful under this window. Some of the achievements of this window are as follows:

- Jobs Created – 19
- Jobs safeguarded - 62
- Mincro, small and medium sized enterprises supported – 32

As part of the Covid-19 recovery suite of schemes, two **Rural Business Investment Scheme (NonAgri)** windows were opened during 2021 for applications, these were both delivered under focus area 6A.

RBIS (Non-Agri) under sub measure 6.4 covered capital investments costs and supports projects in Wales that contribute to one or more of the following strategic objectives:

- 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.

Two application windows were opened during 2021. Thirteen operations were supported under this scheme. The scheme saw the creation of 22 jobs and a further 13 jobs safeguarded.

#### **6.4 – Micro & Small Business Fund MSBF**

This fund is supported through the Welsh Government Rural Communities Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), and Welsh Government. The Micro Small Business Fund (MSBF) is available for micro to small size businesses with fewer than 50 FTE employees,

Due to the pandemic, priorities within the sector changed with staff moving over onto emergency funding schemes which resulted in VW being unable to further commit to new funding rounds for the remaining budget of €10.59m, on the basis that delivery could not be assured. Discussions took place with RDP to return the €10.59m (gross) from both M7.5 & M6.4 and re-evaluations have been completed to reduce the project costs and grant.

The current figures provided below are the gross figures – i.e. they represent the value of the awards, and don't account for the value claimed back from RDP.

Number of MSBF Projects approved	51
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Total Offers committed	€5.8M
Total paid to date	€5.3M
	€471
Remaining MSBF uncommitted budget	K

The actual value committed over 51 projects is therefore €4.24m. This is the total value of the grant award.

The MSBF scheme has been a positive investment ‘product’ in that it focused grant support, pan Wales, to micro and small tourism enterprises, with particular targeting of rural communities. Regrettably for reasons related to the Covid pandemic and budget it has not been possible to complete the programme as expected. The scheme was suspended as a result and a decision was taken week commencing 15th 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, which completed by March 2022.

### **Measure 8.6**

Measure 8.6 is delivered under Focus Areas 5c and 6a of the Programme through the Timber Business Investment Scheme (TBIS). See Priority 5 section above for further information on this measure.

A total of 54 operations supported were recorded under this sub measure and focus area throughout the lifetime of the programme. A total cumulative expenditure of €6.37m has been achieved, under this sub measure and focus area, with a cumulative investment of £19.90m over the programme period.

It has been discovered that earlier approved operations were created against the incorrect focus area on the Welsh government delivery platform. This has been reported on numerous occasions to the European Commission. This has led to a mis-alignment of the performance achievements against 5C and 6A.

### **Measure 16.2**

The Cooperation and Supply Chain Development Scheme, sub measure 16.2, throughout the lifetime of the programme has supported 18 co-operation operations (non EIP), with cumulative spend totalling €2.85m under focus area 6A.

### **Measure 16.9**

Measure 16.9 (support for diversification of farming activities into activities concerning health care, social integration, community-supported agriculture and education about the environment and food) is delivered as part of the Co-operation and Supply Chain Development Scheme (C&SCD). There was no expenditure or cooperation operations supported by the end of 2023 under this Measure.

### **FOCUS Area 6B**

Under Focus Area 6b a cumulative total of €178.87m had been paid during the reporting period, of which €51.85m was for activity undertaken during 2023.

As part of the second programme amendment agreed during 2019 Measure 1 was introduced under FA6b. During 2023 there was no new commitments of expenditure under focus area 6b against Measure 1 were made.

## Measure 1, Knowledge Transfer, and Innovation

Sub measure 1.1, part reported under focus area 6B, for more information on this scheme please see priority area 1.

Under 6B, 1 operation was partly supported, with a cumulative expenditure of €0.21m. Following an audit inspection, this operation was terminated early. Therefore, we are only recording the eligible expenditure prior to the audit.

## Measure 7

Measure 7 (Basic Services and Village Renal in Rural Wales) supported the Rural Community Development Fund. A cumulative total public expenditure of €21.1m was recorded against focus area 6B, supporting 153 operations.

## Measure 7.5

### 7.5 - Tourism Amenity Support Scheme (TAIS)

The Tourism Amenity Support Fund was delivered as part of measure 7.5. under this sub measure 30 operations were supported. This fund was supported through the Welsh Government Rural Communities Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), and Welsh Government.

There was a significant demand for continued funding via the Visit Wales TAIS programme. This proved to be the most popular and oversubscribed fund being delivered by Visit Wales.

Due to the pandemic, priorities within the sector changed with staff moving over onto emergency funding schemes which resulted in VW being unable to further commit to new funding rounds for the remaining budget of €10.58m, on the basis that delivery cannot be assured. Discussions took place with RDP to return the €10.58m (gross) from both M7.5 & M6.4 and re-evaluations have been completed to reduce the project costs and grant. Regrettably for reasons related to the Covid pandemic, the third round was suspended. Most projects completed by March 2021, with a small number (4) continuing into the WG 2021/2022 financial year, which completed in March 2022.

## Measure 16

Measure 16, Cooperation and Supply Chain Development Scheme supported 781 cooperation , operations - 324 under 16.2, and 457 under 16.3, with a total public expenditure of €104.35m, the majority of the spend occurred under measure 16.2 (€93.29m) and the remainder was submeasure 16.3 (€11.06m)

## Measure 16.2

324 operations were supported under this measure. The total public expenditure relating to sub measure 16.2, 6B is €93.29m.

During Annual Implementation Report Verification checks for the 2021 report, it was discovered that the expenditure and achievements for two 16.2 Cooperation and Supply Chain Development Scheme operations were reporting to focus area 6B. These were approved early on in the programme delivery. Both projects have been created on the Welsh Government delivery platform and have been allocated

against priority 6, 6B. During the programme lifetime, a total of €17.05m has been paid to these two operations and is recorded against 6B rather than 2A. It is evident that spend relating to these cases is showing against the output for priority 6, and the expenditure stands at 112.72% of the target. To reallocate the projects to the correct FA would have meant a rebuild of the IT system, which would have added considerable delay to the schemes delivering under the RDP banner. The other option was to begin the application process again, and all applicants would have had to reapply etc. The work they had already started would have been retrospective and become ineligible expenditure.

### **Enabling Natural Resources and Wellbeing (ENRaW)**

This scheme which has now ended it started in April 2018, activity commenced on the creation of the Enabling Natural Resources and Wellbeing in Wales grant scheme (ENRaW), a single environment grant scheme, merging the former Environment Core Grant, Local Authority Single Revenue Grant and the Green Infrastructure Capital Grant into one project-based scheme.

In addition to the evaluation being carried out all project activities and outputs were collated by the Natural Resources team to enable links to be made to wider benefits and outcomes such as enhanced biodiversity and healthy ecosystems alongside health & wellbeing and community cohesion. ENRaW projects supported joint working to address the nature and climate change emergencies, improving the natural resources of Wales, bringing nature to where people live and providing lasting benefits to our communities through new ways of working while creating opportunities for recreation, new skills and new future investment models.

98,323 people engaged in Green Space projects

6,997 Green Spaces improved

121 Meadows created or restored

44 Species protected

6 Projects supporting community growing and creating allotments

29 Community Food Growing initiatives

8 projects planting trees 19,175 trees planted

17 Projects Piloting Social Prescribing

1,579 participants reporting improved well-being from contact with nature

192 Social Prescribing Pilots

Throughout the lifetime of the programme €31.75m has been spent via this scheme.

### **Food Covid Recovery**

Covid-19 impacted the Welsh food and drink sector hugely and threatened business survival. The Welsh Government took action to support the food sector through the immediate impact to the first steps of recovery. In addition, this round aimed to encourage further innovation into under-represented industries that aim to utilise the natural harvest e.g. wool, bracken, herbs, by-products of timber(sap), leather/hides

foraging (not exclusive) to increase circular economy activities, add value to primary supply chains and develop collaborative venture/s for the benefit of the whole of the natural harvest supply chains pan-Wales.

To achieve this the Welsh Government had a few, straightforward objectives:

1. Maximise the number of businesses that survive the immediate Covid-19 disruption and sustain supply chain networks within the sector and allied areas.
2. Minimise job losses and create new opportunities.
3. Encourage new sales and marketing opportunities, focusing on market-aligned solutions, which take into account a changing trading landscape, where there is an additional risk of disruption due to Brexit.

A Food Covid Recovery window was opened towards the end of 2020, with a closing date in early 2021 with a budget of €4.12m.

Through this open call, we looked for innovative new developments to focus on business and supply chain **productivity development and/or improvement, business/supply chain resilience, marketing and new markets potential, risk management and new product/business development** in every way. This may include targeted investment in skills, people and technology such as, but not exclusively improving automation, technical excellence, lean principles, collaboration/clusters, efficiencies gained through sustainable practices and workforce development.

This Window aimed to support the development of partnership initiatives designed to encourage greater collaboration between food, other non-agri primary products, Public Procurement and tourism sectors, to ensure a consistent approach and reduced duplication.

Six operations with a value of €2.23m were supported via this window.

Through the delivery of these projects, we have achieved the following:

- 10 further co-operation operations supported
- 1241 Stakeholders engaged.
- 784 participants in training over 24 days
- 2 jobs created and a further 17 safeguarded.

### **Pilot Actions for Green Growth and the Circular Economy**

This EOI window again opened at the end of 2020, with a closing date in February 2021.

The Welsh Government was committed to enabling a green recovery. Focusing on a green recovery presented the opportunity to both rebuild and rewire our economy in a way that addressed the climate crisis and helped to tackle current levels of inequality, whilst driving better economic outcomes for Wales.

A circular economy meant simply to keep resources in use for as long as possible and avoid all waste. The acceleration of the transition to a circular economy as a core part of a green recovery offers the opportunity to shorten supply chains and improve resilience. In the context of the UK continuing outside the EU, improved supply chain resilience will be even more important and enhance Wales' ability to compete on a high quality, rather than lowest cost basis.



Opportunities for investment under this EOI Window included:

- Support and create further diversity to **increase the resilience of the rural economy**
- Support pilot, **innovative approaches and collaboration** to support social and economic solutions for our natural harvest e.g. wool, bracken, herbs, by-products of timber(sap), leather/hides foraging (not exclusive)
- Strengthen and develop **local supply chains** by reduction of waste and reducing emissions
- Support the development of platforms, clusters and networks to build resilience into **local products** (not just food) and support Wales as a top, sustainable destination to work, live, visit and do business with
- Momentum to accelerate the **transition towards a low carbon economy** for rural communities

Achievements of the four successful projects valued at €928,886 under this window include:

- 9 co-operation operations supported
- 22 participants in training, over 9.3 training days
- 6 networks established
- 112 stakeholders engaged

### **Measure 16.3**

Welsh Government delivered two revenue funds that supported the tourism industry (private and public sectors) to align their marketing activity to our national campaigns including the Themed Years and Wales Way.

Visit Wales boosted this regional tourism development via the Regional Tourism Engagement Fund (RTEF) and Tourism Product Innovation Fund (TPIF) following the approval of a €8.5m investment programme which is part funded via the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 (RDP) to support proposals from October 2017 to March 2021.

RTEF – was aimed at regional destination development while TPIF is aimed at working with private sector partnerships and networks to develop new innovative tourism products. Note TPIF was a de minimis grant and RTEF was no aid.

The purpose of the RTEF/TPIF revenue funds were to:

- contribute to the delivery of a 10% growth target set out in the Partnership for Growth: strategy for tourism 2013-2020
- promote and develop distinctive, high quality visitor destinations through the delivery of their destination management plans
- enable destinations to maximise the benefits from aligning with our product-led thematic years and the Wales Way
- encourage closer joint working between tourism consortia, partnerships and trade groups
- develop and improve the product offer to visitors to benefit the tourism sector, rural tourism and local communities
- help grow the tourism economy in a sustainable way.

The fund's beneficiaries included; tourism industry sectorial partnerships, groups and consortia, third sector and Local Authorities/National Park Authorities who are working in partnership or on behalf of the private sectorial partnerships, groups and consortia, Local Authorities and National Park Authorities, also tourism Associations, third sector and private sector organizations working on behalf of Destination Management Partnerships.

The purpose of the TPIF fund is to work with tourism sector partners across Wales to deliver the 10% growth target set out in the tourism strategy by supporting activity which will:

- encourage closer joint working between trade partnerships to improve the product offer and help grow the tourism economy in Wales in a sustainable way
- enable the private sector to maximise the benefits from aligning with the Year of Discovery 2019, future thematic years and The Wales Way
- reflect all or any of the three key themes for promoting tourism to Wales of adventure, culture and landscape

Two rounds of funding for RTEF/TPIF were launched under this scheme.

The Regional Tourism Network and Marketing Support project was awarded **€3.53m** towards the tourism network grant scheme (i.e. RTEF/TPIF), however an additional €1.5m was transferred, making the grant element €4.9m. The RTEF/TPIF scheme was oversubscribed and €4.9m has been committed in round 1 and 2 and was spent by March 2021.

In terms of the national marketing programme which was awarded €8.24m for the delivery of a national marketing campaign to support the local and regional grant activity via RTEF/TPIF.

A total of €11.06m expenditure has been paid out to the end of 2023 against 16.3, 6b supporting 457 cooperation operations.

### **Measure 19**

LEADER was a form of Territorial Development. Each Local Action Group (LAG) covered a geographical area and prepared a Local Development Strategy (LDS) which sets out a detailed explanation of the area; an analysis of that area through a SWOT assessment; a series of aims and objectives for the area and proposals for activities or initiatives that would achieve those aims and objectives. There were 18 LAGs covering eligible (non-urban) wards in 21 of the 22 Local Authority Areas in Wales.

Implementation completed at the end of June 2023 and the Wales Rural Network Support Unit has loaded information on over 4,435 Local Action Group pilots from the 18 Local Action Groups onto their database, available on the WG's Business Wales website.

Whilst the five Welsh Themes for LEADER (outline below) continue to be considered directly relevant and projects continued to deliver on these themes with the adaptation relevant to recovery following the pandemic.

### **Themes 1:3**

Adding Value to Local Identity

Facilitation pre-commercial development, business partnerships and short supply chains

Exploring new ways of providing local services

Renewable Energy at Community level

Exploitation of digital technology

The following projects are taken from the WRN Website project directory which contains over 850 LEADER projects (and a total of 1,783 RDP projects) - All Projects | Business Wales - Business Wales (gov.wales) There are also four Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) funded under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) who employ the principles of Community-led Local Development to work with Welsh coastal communities. Although Wales does not have multi-funded Local Development Strategies there are nevertheless strong links between the LAGs and the FLAGs and it is recognised that there is a need for good communication throughout implementation to signpost projects to the appropriate fund and also to share best practice.

During the lifetime of the programme, the 75 supported LEADER operations in Wales have helped to achieve a further:

- 54 co-operation projects (47 inter-territorial and 7 trans-national);
- 56 jobs created through supported projects;
- 102 jobs safeguarded;
- 14,670 stakeholders engaged;
- 92,967 participants supported;
- 312 feasibility studies;
- 282 networks established;
- 69 community hubs;
- 3,460 information dissemination actions / promotional and/or marketing activities.

During the reporting period a cumulative total of €53.18m was paid under Measure 19, the majority of which was under Measures 19.2 (€37.00m) and 19.4 (€13.37m). 18 Local Action Groups were supported under LEADER, covering a total rural population of 1,381,745.

### **FOCUS AREA 6C**

Please see Priority 1 section above for information on Measure 1 (Knowledge Transfer) through Farming Connect during the reporting period. Under Focus Area 6c a cumulative total of €1.39m had been paid, of which €0.14m was for activity undertaken during 2023.

In relation to T24, percentage of rural population benefitting from new or improved services / infrastructure (ICT), to the end of 2023, we have achieved 0.63% (19,005 absolute value), against a baseline of 3,034,975.

The baseline population figure for this Target Indicator is 3,034,975, which represents the whole population of Wales, rather than the rural population of 1,381,745 that would have been eligible to benefit from RDP funding. On that basis we consider it is the rural population figure that should act as the baseline for this indicator. This came to light in 2022 when preparing to submit the 2021 AIR report. We were advised, at this point, to provide explanation and justification for this underperformance in the AIR narrative, Section 3

for 2021.

Further interrogation would suggest that it was only sub measure 7.3 that fed into this target indicator. The RCDF scheme that was operated under this measure was closed in 2018/2019 and the funds were realigned to measure 16 in modification 3. As far as we are aware we were not advised by the commission at that time for the need to realign the indicator figures alongside the financials. There was an assumption by Welsh Government that the indicators could be realigned later in the programme. However, this proved to be incorrect.

We have also discussed previously that population benefitting from improved services (other than broadband) should be included with this figure.

### **Measure 7.3**

Measure 7 was delivered via a WG operated grant scheme called the Rural Community Development Fund (RCDF). Under RCDF the WG offered grants for eligible interventions designed to prevent and mitigate the impact of poverty in rural communities improving conditions which can lead to future jobs and growth. Measure 7 is delivered under three Focus Areas: 5c, 6b and 6c with the majority of the financial allocation for the Measure programmed under Focus Area 6b. Since the start of the scheme in late 2015 there have been a total of seven RCDF EOI rounds. No Expression of Interest Rounds were held under the Rural Community Development Fund during 2020 and the Welsh Government did not run any further Expression of Interest Round. See Focus Area 5c for Measure 7.2 (investments of small scale infrastructure including renewable energy). See Focus Area 6b for more information on the RCDF.

To the end of 2022 Measure 7.3 under Focus Area 6c has supported 8 operations with €0.92m cumulative expenditure.

### **Performance Framework Indicators (under priority 6)**

With regards to our programmed performance framework indicators under priority 6, below is the achievements to the end of the programme, December 2023. Explanations and justifications for the underachievement of the first Performance Framework Indicator can be found above.

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Achieved</b>	<b>Percentage Achieved</b>
<b>6</b>	Number of operations supported	416	177	42.55%
<b>6</b>	Total public expenditure	€ 174.31	€ 196.49	112.72%
<b>6</b>	Population covered by LAG	1,381,745	1,381,745	100%

### **1.d) Key information on achievements towards the milestones set in the performance Framework based on Table F**

This section applies to AIR(s) 2016, 2017, 2018 only

### 1.e) Other RDP specific element [optional]

Not Applicable

### 1.f) Where appropriate, the contribution to macro-regional and sea basin strategies

As stipulated by the Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, article 27(3) on the "content of programmes", article 96(3)(e) on the "content, adoption and amendment of operational programmes under the Investment for growth and jobs goal", article 111(3), article 111(4)(d) on "implementation reports for the Investment for growth and jobs goal", and Annex 1, section 7.3 on "contribution of mainstream programmes to macro-regional and sea-basin strategies, this programme contributes to MRS(s) and/or SBS:

The WGRC-RDP2014-2020 has made a contribution to the Atlantic Sea Basin Strategy. It's aims are:

- To promote entrepreneurship and innovation;
- Protect secure and enhance the marine and coastal environment;
- Improve accessibility and connectivity;
- Create a social inclusive and sustainable model of regional develop

The coastal economy is highly relevant to Wales, with 60% of the population living on/near the coast. The support through the RDP contributes to the objectives. Innovation, a cross cutting priority of the programme, has various avenues that affect the coastal economy; through farmer led innovations promoting sustainable practices that impact on the coastal environment. The food centres support businesses that contribute to the coastal economy; and local level innovation through LEADER. This activity was heightened during the peak of the Covid 19 pandemic, LEADER groups refreshed their Local Development strategies to support the repurposing of LEADER to ensure it has the tools to support rural and coastal communities to increase resilience and mobilise local supply chains. COVID recovery CSCDS and RBIS (Food and NonAgri) windows offered support to rural and coastal businesses in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic.

Similarly the interface between land management practices, river water and coastal environments has been recognised as increasingly important. Many elements of the RDP support farmers and land managers to adopt environmentally friendly practices that will limit the environmental impact of farming on rivers and watercourses in Wales. These include: advice, training and knowledge transfer provision; the Sustainable Production Grant provides capital grants to farm businesses to improve their environmental performance and window four, run in 2019, focused specifically on water quality; the Glastir suite of agri-environment schemes and the Sustainable Management Scheme. While the importance of the relationship between environmental land management practices delivered under the RDP and the coastal environment is recognised there is currently an absence of evidence on this relationship in Wales. Using the Welsh Governments Integrated Modelling Platform, ERAMMP is undertaking analysis to help quantify the impact of current and future agricultural policies across ecosystems and associated service delivery. This analysis

will inform evaluation of legacy RDP schemes, notably Glastir and design of CAP replacement Sustainable Farm Scheme

In terms of improving accessibility/connectivity and creating a socially inclusive and sustainable model of community development the Wales RDP has a number of schemes that contribute to rural and coastal communities as well as businesses in those communities. LEADER is the main mechanisms in Wales and operates closely with the four Welsh FLAGs. With regards to accessibility/connectivity the CTA community transport solutions project under Measure 16.2 aims to develop sustainable community transport networks across Wales in recognition of the challenges faced in rural communities regarding transport and access. It is noted that tourism plays an increasing role in the Welsh coastal economy, the RDP provided substantial support to this sector through the Micro Small Business fund, the Tourism amenity investment support scheme and the Regional Tourism Engagement Fund. More information on the schemes are in Section 1c of this report.

- EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)
- EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)
- EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)
- EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP)
- Atlantic Sea Basin Strategy (ATLSBS)

1.f1) ATLSBS

**Priority(s) and objective(s) that the programme is relevant to:**

	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Objective</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1 - Promote entrepreneurship and innovation	1.1 - Sharing knowledge between higher education organisations, companies and research centers
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1 - Promote entrepreneurship and innovation	1.2 - Enhancement of competitiveness and innovation capacities in the maritime economy of the Atlantic area
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 - Promote entrepreneurship and innovation	1.3 - Fostering adaptation and diversification of economic activities by promoting the potential of the Atlantic area
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2 - Protect, secure and develop the potential of the Atlantic marine and coastal environment	2.1 - Improving maritime safety and security
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 - Protect, secure and develop the potential of the Atlantic marine and coastal environment	2.2 - Exploring and protecting marine waters and coastal zones
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2 - Protect, secure and develop the potential of the Atlantic marine and coastal environment	2.3 - Sustainable management of marine resources
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2 - Protect, secure and develop the potential of the Atlantic marine and coastal environment	2.4 - Exploitation of the renewable energy potential of the Atlantic area's marine and coastal environment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3 - Improve accessibility and connectivity	3.1 - Promoting cooperation between ports
<input type="checkbox"/>	4 - Create a socially inclusive and sustainable model of regional development	4.1 - Fostering better knowledge of social challenges in the Atlantic area
<input type="checkbox"/>	4 - Create a socially inclusive and sustainable model of regional development	4.2 - Preserving and promoting the Atlantic's cultural heritage

**Actions or mechanisms used to better link the programme with the Atlantic SBS**

**A. Are the Sea Basin Strategic coordinators (mainly National Coordinators, Priority Area Coordinators or members, and/or Objective coordinators or members) participating in the Monitoring Committee of the programme?**

Yes  No

**B. In selection criteria, have extra points been attributed to specific measures supporting the ATLSBS?**

Yes  No

**C. Has the programme invested EU funds in the ATLSBS?**

Yes  No

Does your programme plan to invest in the ATLSBS in the future? Please elaborate (1 specific sentence)

We do not plan to invest in AATLSBS in the future.

**D. Obtained results in relation to the ATLSBS (n.a. for 2016)**

N/A







**1.g) Currency rate used for conversion AIR (non EUR countries)**

The planning rate of €1 = £0.85 has been used for all commitments / allocation values within the report.

## 2. THE PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE EVALUATION PLAN.

### 2.a) Description of any modifications made to the evaluation plan in the RDP during the year, with their justification

**1. Objectives and purpose:** The objectives and purpose of the Evaluation Plan both remain the same; no additional Programme-specific objectives have been added.

**2. Governance and coordination:** There have been no changes to this part of the evaluation plan

**3. Evaluation topics:** There have been no changes to this part of the evaluation plan. It is still the intention of the Research, Monitoring & Evaluation (RME) team to structure the evaluation activity in stages across the programme. Higher level programme evaluations broken down into the thematic were completed in 2023. The fieldwork and analysis stages of the scheme level evaluations completed in December 2023. These evaluations are now in the report Quality Assurance stage. These scheme level evaluations will form the primary evidence base that will be used to inform the subsequent programme evaluation stage via the ex post evaluation. An ex post scoping exercise has been conducted that considered the evidence available and identified potential gaps that need to be addressed ahead of the full programme ex post. As highlighted, when it comes to the ex post evaluation the primary evidence base to inform that work should be in place, however flexibility will be built in to the ex post evaluation contract to allow any necessary primary fieldwork to collect data identified as a gap.

**4. Evaluation activities:** There have been no changes to this part of the evaluation plan

**5. Data and information management:** Measures continue to be collected through PPIMS, CAPIT, WEFO online (and stored on PPIMS) and RPW online. Land based measures managed by RPW will be collected through CAPIT.

**6. Timeline:** There have been no changes to this part of the evaluation plan.

**7. Communication of evaluation results:** In addition to reports being published on the Wales Rural Network website, all reports will be published on the Welsh Government Statistics and Research Publications page on the Welsh Government website, in order to improve accessibility of evaluation results. There have been no additional changes in the communication strategy beyond those made as part of the modification approved in 2019.

**8. Resources:** Due to the programme closure the RME Team experienced resourcing issues as staff left the RME Team. The RME Team now consists of one Principal Research Officer (Grade 7) as the Senior Research Officer and both Research Officer posts are vacant. To address this the Principal Research Officer is drawing upon resource from researchers outside RME to assist in the completion of the evaluation plan. As the evaluation plan is close to completion RME believe there is sufficient resource to deliver the evaluation plan, however some delays are likely.

## 2.b) A description of the evaluation activities undertaken during the year (in relation to section 3 of the evaluation plan)

Describe activities/problems encountered/solutions in relation to:

### 1. **Preparing and conducting the assessment of the contribution of the RDP to rural development priorities, of programme results and impacts, including a description of evaluation approach and methods chosen.**

As laid out in the Evaluation Plan, evaluation is conducted at both Programme and scheme level.

A number of scheme evaluations have experienced delays due to staffing shortages within the RME Team. In addition some evaluation procurements (e.g. Glastir, Farm Practice Survey and Ex Post Evaluation Scoping Study) took longer than anticipated due to capacity issues within the research marketplace. The meant that the procurements noted above needed to be advertised multiple times, delaying their start date.

#### *Current scheme-level evaluations*

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 a number of 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 was conducted that included 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 were 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 was run to provide sectoral perspectives on the services offered. A series of intervention-specific focus groups also took place.

The evaluation experienced delays due to low response rates to the online survey. The evaluation contractor was given more time to address this. Fieldwork started in February 2023 and has now completed.

Publication was due in May, however, this is going through the final approval and sign off stage, publication is imminent. All published evaluations can be found on the Wales Rural Network pages. Evaluation; Research & Guidance | Business Wales - Business Wales ([gov.wales](http://gov.wales))

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.

The evaluation commenced in January 2020. The arrival of Covid-19 led to a review of the fieldwork options. 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. The final report was delayed as the report Quality Assurance stage highlighted some issues that the contractor needed additional time to address.

The final evaluation report has now been completed and was due to be published by May 2024. However, this is going through the final approval and sign off stage. The UK election period has also meant that we have been unable to publish any evaluation findings or reports. The publication is imminent, and the report will be found on the Wales Rural Network Evaluation page.

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.

Fieldwork started in early 2023 with a sampling framework considering the scheme, geographical region, funding round and the value of the grant offer, and the organisation type of the lead partner (private, public or third sector). An online survey of funded projects was conducted. Interviews were held with funded projects, users/visitors, and local and regional stakeholders. Case study visits were conducted with funded projects. A survey of unsuccessful applicants was not included due to consensus from the steering group regarding the robustness of data (e.g. accuracy of recall given the period of time that has passed).

The final report was published in August 2023.

<https://www.gov.wales/pan-wales-rural-tourism-evaluation>

The Strategy team commissioned research looking at the **Farm Business Grant (FBG)**. The research considered the reasons behind uptake or non-uptake of the grant, with a focus on the role of attending a

Knowledge Transfer Event (KTE).

The research was awarded in late 2019. Fieldwork took place between March 2020 and March 2021 and consisted primarily of a quantitative survey of both applicants and non-applicants to the Farm Business Grant, with 810 completed telephone surveys. The survey was supplemented with qualitative work including focus groups and in-depth interviews with farmers.

Delays to fieldwork due to Covid-19 had a knock-on effect throughout the contract. The pre-election period also led to an additional delay on the fieldwork process. Due to these issues, a number of requests were made to extend the contract with no additional financial cost. Whereas it was planned that a follow-up impact evaluation would be commissioned separately by the Strategy team, a review of the data collected resulted in a re-drafting of the report to incorporate evidence of impacts.

The final report was published July 2023.

<https://www.gov.wales/farm-business-grant-fbg-evaluation>

The 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.

The main focus of the research was the evaluation of FBIS and RBISF, which involved extensive primary research. A broader review predominantly based on a secondary research approach looked at Cywain, Project Helix and Food Skills Cymru, alongside the FBIS and RBISF schemes. The primary fieldwork comprises a survey of grant beneficiaries, interviews with beneficiaries, a counterfactual approach (as detailed in the original Evaluation Plan) comprising of a survey and interviews with non-beneficiaries, and interviews and workshops with the delivery team and key stakeholders. A presentation of findings was held in November 2022.

Both reports have been completed, and are going through the final approval and sign off stage. These will be published on the Wales Rural Network site..

An evaluation of the **Timber Business Investment Scheme (TBIS)** was commissioned in October 2021. A theory of change approach was adopted with a mixed method approach (surveys and questionnaires with a range of stakeholders and a survey of unsuccessful applications). 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 took place during November-December 2022

The final report was published October 2023.

<https://www.gov.wales/timber-business-investment-scheme-tbis-evaluation>

An evaluation of the **Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being (ENRaW) scheme** was commissioned in 2021. The Theory of Change and Evaluation Framework report was delivered in January 2022. Research methods include Welsh Government and Stakeholder Interviews, two surveys, an analysis of project level documentation and data, project level interviews/focus groups, unsuccessful applicant interviews, and in-

depth Case Studies. The draft interim report was delivered in Autumn 2022 and will be published early in 2023. Phase two of the fieldwork commenced in Spring 2023, and The Interim Report was published March 2023.

<https://www.gov.wales/evaluation-enabling-natural-resources-and-well-being-grant-interim-report>

The final evaluation report was published March 2024.

<https://www.gov.wales/evaluation-enabling-natural-resources-and-well-being-enraw-grant-final-report>

The **evaluation of LEADER** provided an assessment of the delivery of the LEADER approach in Wales in the current programme.

The evaluation adopted a theory of change approach, drawing upon data collected through a mixed methods approach, employing interviews and surveys with Local Action Group members and admin staff, beneficiaries and broader stakeholders and an online survey of LEADER stakeholders, including LAG chairs, LAG managers, and beneficiaries. The evaluation commenced in Summer 2020 following delays associated with Covid 19.

The final report was published January 2023.

<https://www.gov.wales/evaluation-leader-wales>

The evaluation of the **European Innovation Partnership (EIP)** was awarded in February 2021. The evaluation adopts a theory of change approach, drawing upon data collected through a mixed methods approach of interviews and surveys with the multiple actors involved in EIP delivery, including operational group members, farmers/foresters, Welsh Government policy officials, other UK EIP-AGRI leads and wider industry stakeholders. A survey of unsuccessful applicants provides counterfactual evidence.

Initial fieldwork started in December 2021. A presentation of findings from the interim stages of the fieldwork took place in May 2022. The Interim report covers the implementation process and impact of projects funded in the scheme and summarises the broad range of projects with potential for scaling up, effectiveness of delivery, robust application and appraisal process, and preliminary evidence of the impact of the projects. The Interim report was published January 2023.

<https://www.gov.wales/european-innovation-partnership-wales-interim-evaluation>

Like the other evaluation reports highlighted above, this was due to be published in May. However, this has been delayed due to the UK parliamentary elections. The publication is imminent and will be published on the Wales Rural network site.

**Sustainable Production Grant (SPG) Evaluation.** An evaluation of the capital investment SPG scheme was commissioned in 2022, focused on assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of implementing the scheme, the outcomes and impacts achieved, and value for money.

The inception meeting was held in October 2022, and the Theory of Change report was delivered in January 2023. The evaluation adopted a mixed method approach, comprising two surveys of successful and unsuccessful applicants to the scheme respectively, in-depth interviews/focus groups with a sub-sample of successful applicants, Welsh Government and Stakeholder Interviews, an analysis of project level documentation and data including business plans. Fieldwork commenced early 2023 and is now complete.



This evaluation report will be published on the Wales Rural Network website in due course.

**Co-Operation and Supply Chain Development Scheme (CSCDS) Evaluation.** An evaluation of activities undertaken as part of the CSCDS, specifically under measures 16.2, 16.4 and 16.8 was commissioned in August 2022.

During the scope stage it was identified that there was no current policy lead in place, and instead a steering group was formed for the evaluation.

For a number of reasons (delays to project associated with Covid-19, out-of-date contact details following project end dates), a complete record of project-level evaluation reports was not available. Thus, two periods of meta-review were built into the evaluation to allow more time for projects to finish and evidence to be collated. The first meta-reviews was conducted in November 2022 and the second is scheduled for March 2023.

A stakeholder mapping exercise identified a broad range of stakeholders. A mixed method approach was employed including two surveys (external stakeholders, projects), qualitative interviews (Welsh Government officials, external stakeholders), focus groups and case studies. Fieldwork has now completed.

The publishing of this report has been delayed. The final report will be available on the Wales Rural Network website imminently.

**Glastir evaluation.** Glastir is a suite of schemes designed to: combat climate change; improve water quality and managing water resources to help reduce flood risk; protect soil resources and improve soil condition; maintain and enhancing biodiversity; manage and protecting landscapes and the historic environment; create new opportunities to improve access and understanding of the countryside. The evaluation was awarded in April 2023. The procurement of this evaluation experienced significant delays due to limited capacity in the research marketplace, forcing RME to advertise this contract multiple times before it could be awarded.

The evaluation uses a mixed methods approach including i.e. desk-based review, stakeholder interviews, focus groups, online survey, and a value for money assessment. The Glastir evaluation uses output from the Farm Practice Survey to help assess the impact of the scheme. The final report for the Glastir evaluation has been delayed to allow the evaluation to incorporate the latest environmental impact data that is due to become available in July 2024.

The final report will be delivered September 2024.

**Farm Practice Survey** has been commissioned to answer the Common Evaluation Questions defined by the European Commission that are required as part of the 2024 ex post evaluation of the WGRC-RDP. The findings will provide evidence on the activities, outcomes and impacts of the suite of Glastir schemes. The contract for the survey was awarded in May 2023. The survey samples 600 farms that have taken part in the Glastir scheme.

An Interim report was submitted in December 2023, with a second Interim report scheduled for April 2024. The final report is due July 2024.

**Ex post scoping study** was awarded in March 2023. The study considered the effectiveness of the implementation, management and delivery of the Programme and Scheme's to date, the outcomes and early impacts of the RDP, mapped out the existing evidence base and identified gaps in preparation for the ex post

evaluation.

The final report was submitted by the contractor in January 2024. The report has not been published as it is a Welsh Government internal document to help shape the design of the RDP ex post evaluation.

*Strategy Team research work under development*

**Ex post evaluation.** The Strategy Team are currently preparing the specification for the procurement of the programme-level ex post evaluation. This will be procured during 2023 and the evaluation will take place during 2024. Work is underway preparing the Ex-Post Evaluation. The Scoping Study has given us a basis on which to build our evaluation of the programme. Due to the UK election period, we have been unable to procure an evaluator to undertake this exercise for us. However, we will be looking to do this late July 2024. The report will be signed off and ready to submit by the end of December 2024.

*Cross-cutting objectives (sustainable development, climate change and innovation).*

Evaluation questions on cross-cutting objectives are included in all specifications. Moreover where elements of the programme are directly contributing to these areas, specific evaluation work is planned to capture the scale and nature of the contributions to these areas. For example, in relation to providing evidence on Climate Change adaptation and sustainable development, the Environmental and Rural Affairs Monitoring and Modelling Programme (ERAMMP) continues to be managed by the relevant scientific experts as stated in the Evaluation Plan.

**2.c) A description of activities undertaken in relation to the provision and management of data (in relation to section 4 of the evaluation plan)**

**1. Preparing and running the operations database to collect data and information for evaluation,**

There have been no changes during 2022; the eCohesion requirement (concerning electronic information exchange with beneficiaries) continues to be met. Measures continue to be collected through the Programme and Project Monitoring Information System (PPIMS). PPIMS is a tried and tested system possessing features that captures the programme requirements of the Pillar 2 socio-economic programme and schemes. Land based measures managed by RPW continue to be collected through CAPIT.

**2. Screening data and information sources/providers to ensure the application of robust evaluation methods (including conducting the counterfactual analysis),**

The Strategy team has liaised with the WG's Agricultural Statistics team to undertake some pilot analysis, with a view to informing the development of more robust impact evaluation techniques in the WGRC-RDP 2014-2020. It is envisaged that impact evaluation work with non-farm business beneficiaries would utilise business datasets held by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). It is a requirement of the ONS that access to their business datasets is restricted to approved researchers, so it is essential that the commissioning of this impact evaluation work stipulates that the project team must consist of researchers with these approvals in place from the ONS. It is also hoped that administrative records may be used to help assess the impact of agricultural support initiatives on farm turnover and employment and advanced discussions have taken place with the WG's administrative data research unit to explore the feasibility of

this, which could be utilised in the ex post evaluation.

The Strategy team is continuing to liaise with the ERAMMP project team to ensure the most effective approach to conducting Farms surveys that will meet the multiple requirements of different areas of evaluation. In recognition of this, and concerns around survey burden more broadly, the Strategy team are working with other teams in the Welsh Government to consider ways in which a more integrated approach to surveying across the RDP is achieved.

### **3. Agreements with data providers and necessary arrangements/legal steps to include the identified providers' data in the databases used in the RDP evaluation,**

The WEFO PPIMS system has been extended to allow reporting on the socio-economic aspects of the RDP. In order to be able to report on the information held within the PPIMS environment Business Objects software is used in conjunction with other IT solutions. Business Objects allows Programme wide reporting through the amalgamation of high level data held within other data bases, such as PPIMS.

The Strategy team continues to work with the Department Knowledge Information Manager (DKIM) and the information asset owner (IAO) to ensure all data handled and processed as part of the evaluation work follows all legal governance steps and in line with our privacy notices and GDPR.

### **4. Arrangements to fill data gaps and collect missing information.**

The ex post scoping is currently being commissioned to map the evidence base, identify any gaps and suggest approaches to fill the gaps. Beneficiary surveys are included in the Evaluation Plan, as these provide information that complements the monitoring data. As discussed above, the Strategy team are currently working with other parts of the WG to approaches to surveying farm businesses to avoid survey fatigue.

Where survey work is not possible it is the intention of the Strategy team to use more qualitative methods with relevant stakeholders to provide assessments of support offered through the RDP.

Project level data including surveys and evaluation reports will also be utilised, along with non-governmental reports.

**2.d) A list of completed evaluations, including references to where they have been published on-line**

<b>Publisher/Editor</b>	Welsh Government
<b>Author(s)</b>	O’Prey, L., Usher. S., and Jones, T. (Wavehill)
<b>Title</b>	Farm Business Grant Evaluation
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>The Farm Business Grant (FBG) provided grants of between £3,000 and £12,000. The main objectives of the FBG were to increase on-farm investment, technical performance, on-farm production and resource efficiencies. The scheme also sought to support farmers in business planning.</p> <p>The evaluation assessed how the scheme’s design and implementation influenced the take up of support. The research focused on understanding the views and experiences of farmers accessing the FBG in Expression of Interest (EOI) windows 1 to 7. Within these EOI windows, potential applicants had to attend a Farming for the Future Knowledge Transfer Event (KTE).</p> <p>The research considered the reasons behind uptake or non-uptake of the grant, with a focus on the role of attending a KTE.</p>
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://www.gov.wales/farm-business-grant-fbg-evaluation">https://www.gov.wales/farm-business-grant-fbg-evaluation</a>

<b>Publisher/Editor</b>	Welsh Government
<b>Author(s)</b>	Bryer, N and Bebb, H.. (OB3 Research)
<b>Title</b>	Pan Wales Rural Tourism evaluation
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>The Welsh Government’s Pan Wales Rural Tourism schemes were delivered under the Rural Communities-Rural Development Programme (RC-RDP) 2014-2020 which aimed to ‘promote competitiveness and create sustainable growth and jobs for the people who live and work in rural Wales.</p> <p>Four funding schemes were delivered via Pan Wales Rural Tourism over a four-year period between 2017/18 and 2020/21:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Micro and Small Business Fund (MSBF)</li> <li>• Tourism Amenity Investment Scheme (TAIS)</li> <li>• Tourism Product Innovation Fund (TPIF)</li> <li>• Regional Tourism Engagement Fund (RTEF)</li> </ul> <p>The aim of the evaluation was to review the four tourism schemes and provide an independent assessment of scheme implementation and delivery, including the outcomes and impact of the schemes.</p>
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://www.gov.wales/pan-wales-rural-tourism-evaluation">https://www.gov.wales/pan-wales-rural-tourism-evaluation</a>

<b>Publisher/Editor</b>	Welsh Government
<b>Author(s)</b>	Griffiths, E., Sharp, N., Grunhut, S., (all Wavehill), and Woods, M.. (Aberystwyth University)
<b>Title</b>	An evaluation of LEADER in Wales.
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>LEADER was devised in the 1990s in response to what was perceived by the European Commission to be the failure of traditional top-down policies to address problems faced by many rural areas. LEADER has been active in Wales since the 1990s. The current iteration is one of a number of schemes within the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014 to 2020 (‘the RDP’), a Wales-wide programme supporting a wide range of activities designed to increase the sustainability and resilience of Wales’ natural environment, land-based sector, food businesses, and rural communities.</p> <p>The evaluation assessed the implementation of LEADER in Wales in the current RDP programming period (2014 to 2020), and the contribution of LEADER to local development in rural areas since it has been applied in Wales.</p>
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://www.gov.wales/evaluation-leader-wales">https://www.gov.wales/evaluation-leader-wales</a>

<b>Publisher/Editor</b>	Welsh Government
<b>Author(s)</b>	Teifi, I., and Griffiths, E. (Wavehill)
<b>Title</b>	Timber Business Investment Scheme Evaluation

<b>Abstract</b>	<p>TBIS (2014–2020) was a £9m capital grant scheme available to private forest and tree nursery owners, local authorities, or other public sector forest owners and small to medium-sized enterprises (SME) that are engaged in forest planting and management activities, timber harvesting, and/or timber processing. The scheme was funded through the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014–2020 and was delivered between early 2016 to June 2023.</p> <p>The rationale behind the scheme was to use targeted investment to provide opportunities for timber businesses to grow, to improve the condition of woodlands in Wales, and to bring inaccessible woodlands into management. A sizeable proportion of woodlands in Wales was unmanaged or undermanaged, often due to its inaccessibility, and thus required different types of machinery for sustainable production.</p> <p>The evaluation assessed the implementation and impact of the scheme within Wales. A theory of change approach was adopted with a mixed method approach.</p>
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://www.gov.wales/timber-business-investment-scheme-tbis-evaluation">https://www.gov.wales/timber-business-investment-scheme-tbis-evaluation</a>

<b>Publisher/Editor</b>	Welsh Government
<b>Author(s)</b>	Bryer, N and Bebb, H.. (OB3 Research)
<b>Title</b>	Evaluation of Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being (ENRaW) Grant: Interim Report
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>ENRaW grant scheme was a single environment grant scheme established in April 2018. It was expected to support projects to make improvements in and around residential areas and to deliver benefits for people, businesses, and their communities.</p> <p>The aim of the evaluation was to assess if the projects, delivered between Apr 19 and Mar 23, deliver against scheme aims and objectives.</p> <p>The evaluation was designed to review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The administration and delivery of the grant scheme, including application processes, monitoring requirements and grant management with a view to identifying lessons learnt.</li> <li>• The direct impact of grants, including achievement of targets and outcomes set out in applications and delivery plans.</li> <li>• Wider and unexpected benefits and achievements, including any wider multiple benefits over and above direct benefits expected.</li> </ul>

	This Interim Report considered the administration and delivery of the grant scheme and provided early findings on the impact of the scheme.
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://www.gov.wales/evaluation-enabling-natural-resources-and-well-being-grant-interim-report">https://www.gov.wales/evaluation-enabling-natural-resources-and-well-being-grant-interim-report</a>

<b>Publisher/Editor</b>	Welsh Government
<b>Author(s)</b>	Teifi, I., and Griffiths, E. (Wavehill)
<b>Title</b>	European Innovation Partnership Wales Evaluation Phase 2: Interim Evaluation Report
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>European Innovation Partnership (EIP) Wales was launched in January 2016 and funded under the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI). Just under £2m was made available from the Welsh Government Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme (2014–2020) to deliver this scheme. The role of EIP Wales was to facilitate innovative and new ideas for farming and forestry businesses.</p> <p>The report covers the implementation process and impact of projects funded in the scheme and summarises the broad range of projects with potential for scaling up, effectiveness of delivery, robust application and appraisal process, and preliminary evidence of the impact of the projects</p>
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://www.gov.wales/european-innovation-partnership-wales-interim-evaluation">https://www.gov.wales/european-innovation-partnership-wales-interim-evaluation</a>

## 2.e) A summary of completed evaluations, focussing on evaluation findings

Please summarize the findings from evaluations completed in 2020, per CAP objective (or RDP priority, where appropriate).

Report on positive or negative effects/impacts (including the supporting evidence). Please don't forget to mention the source of the findings.

### **Pan Wales Rural Tourism evaluation**

Effectiveness of scheme management:

- The four schemes were managed appropriately and effectively; grant application processes were rigorous, and funding was allocated in an equitable and transparent manner.
- The two-stage application process was appropriate and application guidance was fit for purpose and the time taken to assess applications was reasonable and acceptable to the sector.
- A key strength of the grant management process was the role played by Visit Wales officers who supported applicants and grant holders, and this should continue in the future.
- Preparing financial claims was the most onerous element of the scheme administration for grant holders and future financial claims processes could be simplified, particularly for smaller grant funds.
- Reporting requirements and evidencing outputs was reasonable and proportionate although there is some suggestion that scheme level outputs were under-reported due to the lack of follow up monitoring visits.

In terms of the delivery and implementation of the schemes:

- Performance against scheme-level targets was very mixed, with cases of significant over and under-achievement alike despite some targets being revised downwards; some targets were set at too low a level and others were not achieved because of external factors such as the pandemic; it is difficult to offer a view on how well the schemes performed against their funded targets, as the targets set were not realistic.

Achievement of objectives:

- Funded projects performed well against their aims and objectives.
- The main enablers to strong performance were detailed up-front planning, effective collaborative working, skilled and experienced delivery teams, and careful procurement; flexibility on the part of the funder and grant recipient was also a vital component of successful implementation.
- COVID-19 generated many of the delivery challenges experienced by grant holders from 2020 onwards and accounted for much of the under-performance against funded targets; other delivery challenges experienced by grant holders included increased costs, staffing issues, and partnership working.
- In terms of cross-cutting themes there was good evidence that funded projects contributed positively



towards innovation, equality of opportunity, sustainable development, addressing climate change and the Welsh language. There was less evidence that funded projects contributed towards tackling poverty and social exclusion in rural areas.

#### Outcomes and impact of the schemes:

- MSBF funding was used appropriately to extend and improve the quality of facilities for visitors, and in the absence of the support many developments would have been less ambitious in their scale and quality. There is convincing evidence that large-scale capital projects would not have progressed at all in the absence of grant funding. Changes in visitor demand for MSBF funded projects, whilst positive, cannot be disentangled from the wider effects of external factors such as the pandemic and current increased living costs. Where demand increased, businesses believe that project funding positively contributed towards the change. More modest changes in visitor demand during off-peak and shoulder seasons were reported by MSBF businesses, suggesting that the investment had less of an impact on addressing this policy objective
- TAIS funding was used effectively to implement basic infrastructural improvements across popular tourism areas which are expected to result in better visitor experiences at key destination sites. In the absence of the fund, these improvements would not have taken place. There is some evidence available to show that there has been increased use of TAIS funded facilities, but similar future schemes would benefit from adopting and capturing more comprehensive data on visitor numbers and experiences
- RTEF projects helped to strengthen collaborative working across the tourism sector and these collaborative arrangements are being sustained post funding. There is less evidence of TPIF funded collaborations being sustained

#### Value for money assessment:

- The cost per job created or safeguarded was higher than anticipated (£13,468 compared to the target of £10,000 per job created or safeguarded)
- Grant funding of £4.5 million contributed to a turnover growth of circa £12.7 million per annum across supported businesses
- Value for money would have been higher had the pandemic not impacted negatively upon business performance

Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/pan-wales-rural-tourism-evaluation>

#### **LEADER in Wales evaluation**

- The 75 supported LEADER projects in Wales have further supported more than 700 projects through the Local Action Groups in the 18 Rural Areas of Wales, with several innovative ideas being piloted amongst more ‘traditional’ local development projects.
- Project activities were found to have delivered against the Cross-Cutting Themes and Cross-Cutting Objectives. Literature suggests the added value of LEADER manifests itself in three ways: improved social capital, improved governance and enhanced results (better projects). Evidence of each of these elements of added value were found to have been delivered by LEADER in Wales.
- More marked outcomes are expected in the longer term. The report demonstrates this through

‘legacy’ case studies of projects supported by previous LEADER schemes in Wales (pre-2014).

- Previous iterations of LEADER pre-2014 had an overly complex monitoring system. In response, the current number and range of performance indicators is small and simpler. However, the narrow list of indicators limited the ability to determine the performance of LEADER.
- LAGs had more financial control and greater certainty of their budget during the current programming period. This was generally regarded as a positive development.
- The role of the Rural Relationship Manager as a single point of contact between LAGs/administrative bodies and the Welsh Government was an effective communication approach
- The research identifies three characteristics of effective LEADER administration: being regarded as a LAG-led independent approach, being seen to be open and responsive to new ideas and having strong networks in place to co-operate with others and draw on knowledge and expertise.
- LAGs are central to the LEADER/CLLD approach and consistent participation is essential to providing continuity in local decision making.
- The approach to ‘animation’ in the local area varies across Wales, with some concern there is a ‘grant scheme’ approach in certain areas.
- Networking and co-operation are both key features of LEADER and opportunities for these have generally not been realised to date.
- The evaluators presented a series of 14 recommendations based on the findings of the research.

Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/evaluation-leader-wales>

### **Farm Business Grant (FBG) evaluation**

- Overall, the research found that perceptions of the FBG were positive. Many found the application process simple and straightforward. The Farming for the Future KTEs were generally well received, and they were effective in driving engagement with broader support and advice offered through Farming Connect.
- There were apparent differences in the characteristics of farms and levels of engagement with the FBG. Together, this suggests that there are factors that shape engagement independently of the scheme’s design and implementation (e.g. the economic size of farms, farm type, the views of farmers themselves towards innovation).
- Where barriers do exist in the design of the FBG, these tended to focus on the extent and nature of the capital items offered through the scheme and the minimum outlay required of applicants. Signing up for Farming Connect and attendance at a KTE was not found to be a significant barrier to engagement. In terms of addressing potential barriers in the FBG’s design.
- On the whole, those attending KTEs found them helpful and informative. Across the survey and in focus groups, some respondents highlighted that they felt they had not fully understood elements of FBG, or there were apparent misunderstandings of the scheme’s design, eligibility and application process. These were peripheral perspectives however as overall communications effective and clear.
- Including broader support alongside capital grants was an effective approach in advancing the objectives of the FBG. Encouraging potential applicants to sign up to Farming Connect expanded and deepened engagement with support offered. The KTEs themselves showed modest impact on knowledge and behaviours around sustainable business planning.
- In terms of the broader impacts of the programme, there was indicative evidence to suggest that

investments had stimulated improvements in the technical efficiency of farms. This included time savings, making processes more effective and efficient, and ultimately savings to the farm or business. There were also potential downstream impacts deriving from increased engagement with Farming Connect support.

- Together, the FBG offers important examples of effective practice in the design and implementation of capital grant schemes aimed at supporting the farming community.

Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/farm-business-grant-fbg-evaluation>

### **Timber Business Investment Scheme (TBIS)**

- Alignment with the Welsh Government's policy objectives was mixed. There was good alignment between TBIS and broader policy objectives. For instance, there was strong alignment with several of the Woodlands for Wales strategic targets regarding developing greater sustainable management of woodlands but weaker alignment with woodland creation which was a primary objective.
- Beneficiaries had a mixed response to the effectiveness of the expression of interest, application stage and appraisal process, with relatively similar proportions of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. The application process was found to be particularly complex with a third of beneficiaries hiring a consultant which raises questions about fairness of the scheme. The appraisal process was deemed effective however favoured larger business applicants due to the Value for Money aspect.
- The effectiveness of engagement with beneficiaries and potential applicants was limited due to constraints on support available in the application stage. The claims and monitoring processes were overall satisfactory however there were issues in relation to time delays, bureaucracy, and lack of flexibility.
- 71% of the £9 million budget was successfully claimed. While demand was high, a combination of internal and external issues led to attrition in the amount claimed.
- TBIS supported 74% of its target number of operations however it performed well against all other KPI targets. Targets were noted as modest by the evaluators.
- The evidence suggests that the scheme has had an impact with regard to improving the capabilities of the timber sector in Wales. Most beneficiaries believe that they achieved what they had set out to achieve. In situ Welsh Government inspections support this claim.
- The economic impact assessment estimated that TBIS created or safeguarded 71 jobs in total, equivalent to ca. £110k in investment for each job created or safeguarded, although this estimate is limited by the small sample size and other constraints within the methodology.
- Turnover data suggests that TBIS generated growth for beneficiaries, an estimated £2.5m in net additional Gross Value Added. Beyond this, there is strong future potential for further economic returns, particularly when considering that 30% of projects were still active at the time of survey. Many beneficiaries felt that it would take more time to see the economic impact.

Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/timber-business-investment-scheme-tbis-evaluation>

## **Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being (ENRaW)**

The evaluation found that ENRaW:

- Closely reflected Welsh Government policy and strategies by supporting a wide range of cross-policy projects spanning community and social, environmental, economic, and cultural policies across Wales at scale and pace.
- Encouraged and supported significant cross-sector working which would have been unlikely to have been achieved otherwise.
- Effectively supported the establishment and development of new partnerships and enabled others to expand and strengthen, both geographically and in terms of the partners involved.
- Funded good quality projects which were aligned to its community and social, environmental, economic, and cultural ambitions.

Scheme administration and delivery:

- ENRaW was promoted effectively and proved a popular funding scheme as it offered to support 100% of project costs over a medium-term period of three years.
- Window 1 grant application, assessment and administration arrangements were reasonable and appropriate, and a clear strength of this funding window was the applicant's ability to deal directly with a Welsh Government officer; the transfer of the scheme into RDP mechanisms and the need to satisfy RDP funding requirements was disruptive and detrimental to the smooth administration of the scheme.

Achievements and performance:

- Window 1 funded projects delivered as intended whilst Windows 2 and 3 projects faced greater issues such as shorter than planned delivery period, grant administration issues and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Projects were only able to spend 83% of their allocated funding (£36.5m), and £7.5m of the £44m funded awarded was not spent at the time of drafting the final evaluation report.
- An appropriate set of indicators was adopted to demonstrate the outputs being achieved by ENRaW projects, but these were not always clearly defined or consistently interpreted by projects.
- Some of the outputs achieved by Window 1 projects were substantial e.g., engaging nearly 100,000 people and planting over 19,000 trees; and Window 1 projects performed well against their targets.
- The absence of verified monitoring data for Window 2 and 3 funded projects made it impossible to offer any conclusions about the achievements and performance of these projects.

In terms of benefits and outcomes achieved, the evaluation found that:

- Projects delivered a very wide range of outcomes which cut across different policies and sectors; ENRaW was most successful in generating community, social and environmental benefits; whilst still positive, projects achieved fewer cultural and economic benefits.
- Outcomes relating to improvements made (e.g., to access facilities) are the most likely to be sustained on an ongoing basis whilst those which are dependent on ongoing resources and capacity (e.g., co-ordinating volunteering and educational opportunities) are the least likely to be sustained in the future without another source of funding.
- The lack of overall scheme outputs and achievements made it difficult to offer a view on the value for money achieved via ENRaW; the scheme could have achieved better value for money had funded projects been afforded their full delivery period to fully utilise their funding allocation and deliver their objectives.
- There was good evidence that activities are being sustained post funding largely because partnerships have secured grant funding from other sources; these other funding sources are often considered more suitable than ENRaW for partnerships and the type of activities being delivered.

Achieving cross cutting objectives:

- Projects delivered innovative and meaningful activities to contribute towards the RDP Cross Cutting Objectives and the Welsh Government cross-cutting themes; projects also used and promoted the Welsh language in a positive way; there was very little evidence to demonstrate how projects had embraced gender mainstreaming.
- Whilst projects contributed positively to RDP Focus Areas which were closely aligned with their remit (such as rural development, jobs, and diversification) their contribution to other more technical Focus Areas ambitions was more limited as projects tended not to focus on agricultural or forestry innovation or developments.
- Engagement with marginalised communities was an exceptionally strong feature of ENRaW projects with extensive evidence gathered over the course of the evaluation that they worked with disadvantaged and under-represented groups.

Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/evaluation-enabling-natural-resources-and-well-being-enraw-grant-final-report>

**2.f) A description of communication activities undertaken in relation to publicising evaluation findings (in relation to section 6 of the evaluation plan)**

Reference shall be made to the evaluation plan, any difficulties encountered in implementation shall be described, together with solutions adopted or proposed.

<b>Date / Period</b>	10/01/2023
<b>Title of communication activity/event &amp; topic of evaluation findings discussed/ disseminated</b>	An evaluation of LEADER in Wales. The evaluation of LEADER in Wales was published in Welsh and English on the Wales Rural Network site and the Welsh Government Knowledge and Analytical Services webpage to maximise its reach.
<b>Overall organiser of activity/ event</b>	The Research and Monitoring evaluation team worked with the Wales Rural network and other Welsh Government staff to publish the reports.
<b>Information channels/format used</b>	The reports were published on the Welsh Government Statistics and Research Webpage and the Wales Rural Network website
<b>Type of target audience</b>	It is the aim that the publication on the Welsh Governments Statistics and research webpage would reach other research and academic stakeholders while the Wales Rural Network webpage would allow better engagement with rural stakeholders.
<b>Approximate number of stakeholders reached</b>	17
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://www.gov.wales/evaluation-leader-wales">https://www.gov.wales/evaluation-leader-wales</a>

<b>Date / Period</b>	10/01/2023
<b>Title of communication activity/event &amp; topic of evaluation findings discussed/ disseminated</b>	European Innovation Partnership Wales Evaluation Phase 2: Interim Evaluation Report. The evaluation of European Innovation Partnership Wales (Interim Evaluation) was published in Welsh and English on the Wales Rural Network site and the Welsh Government Knowledge and Analytical Services webpage to maximise its reach.
<b>Overall organiser of activity/ event</b>	The Research and Monitoring evaluation team worked with the Wales Rural network and other Welsh Government staff to publish the reports.
<b>Information channels/format used</b>	The reports were published on the Welsh Government Statistics and Research Webpage and the Wales Rural Network website.
<b>Type of target audience</b>	It is the aim that the publication on the Welsh Governments Statistics and research webpage would reach other research and academic stakeholders while the Wales Rural Network webpage would allow better engagement with rural stakeholders.

<b>Approximate number of stakeholders reached</b>	17
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://www.gov.wales/european-innovation-partnership-wales-interim-evaluation">https://www.gov.wales/european-innovation-partnership-wales-interim-evaluation</a>

<b>Date / Period</b>	09/03/2023
<b>Title of communication activity/event &amp; topic of evaluation findings discussed/ disseminated</b>	Evaluation of Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being (ENRaW) Grant: Interim Report. The evaluation of Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being (ENRaW) Grant: Interim Report was published in Welsh and English on the Wales Rural Network site and the Welsh Government Knowledge and Analytical Services webpage to maximise its reach.
<b>Overall organiser of activity/ event</b>	The Research and Monitoring evaluation team worked with the Wales Rural network and other Welsh Government staff to publish the reports.
<b>Information channels/ format used</b>	The reports were published on the Welsh Government Statistics and Research Webpage and the Wales Rural Network website.
<b>Type of target audience</b>	It is the aim that the publication on the Welsh Governments Statistics and research webpage would reach other research and academic stakeholders while the Wales Rural Network webpage would allow better engagement with rural stakeholders.
<b>Approximate number of stakeholders reached</b>	17
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://www.gov.wales/evaluation-enabling-natural-resources-and-well-being-grant-interim-report">https://www.gov.wales/evaluation-enabling-natural-resources-and-well-being-grant-interim-report</a>

<b>Date / Period</b>	13/07/2023
<b>Title of communication activity/event &amp; topic of evaluation findings discussed/ disseminated</b>	Farm Business Grant Evaluation. The Farm Business Grant Evaluation was published in Welsh and English on the Wales Rural Network site and the Welsh Government Knowledge and Analytical Services webpage to maximise its reach.
<b>Overall organiser of activity/ event</b>	The Research and Monitoring evaluation team worked with the Wales Rural network and other Welsh Government staff to publish the reports.
<b>Information channels/ format used</b>	The reports were published on the Welsh Government Statistics and Research Webpage and the Wales Rural Network website.

<b>Type of target audience</b>	It is the aim that the publication on the Welsh Governments Statistics and research webpage would reach other research and academic stakeholders while the Wales Rural Network webpage would allow better engagement with rural stakeholders.
<b>Approximate number of stakeholders reached</b>	17
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://www.gov.wales/farm-business-grant-fbg-evaluation">https://www.gov.wales/farm-business-grant-fbg-evaluation</a>

<b>Date / Period</b>	29/08/2023
<b>Title of communication activity/event &amp; topic of evaluation findings discussed/ disseminated</b>	Pan Wales Rural Tourism evaluation. The Pan Wales Rural Tourism evaluation was published in Welsh and English on the Wales Rural Network site and the Welsh Government Knowledge and Analytical Services webpage to maximise its reach.
<b>Overall organiser of activity/ event</b>	The Research and Monitoring evaluation team worked with the Wales Rural network and other Welsh Government staff to publish the reports.
<b>Information channels/ format used</b>	The reports were published on the Welsh Government Statistics and Research Webpage and the Wales Rural Network website.
<b>Type of target audience</b>	It is the aim that the publication on the Welsh Governments Statistics and research webpage would reach other research and academic stakeholders while the Wales Rural Network webpage would allow better engagement with rural stakeholders.
<b>Approximate number of stakeholders reached</b>	17
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://www.gov.wales/pan-wales-rural-tourism-evaluation">https://www.gov.wales/pan-wales-rural-tourism-evaluation</a>

<b>Date / Period</b>	31/10/2023
<b>Title of communication activity/event &amp; topic of evaluation findings discussed/ disseminated</b>	Timber Business Investment Scheme Evaluation. The Timber Business Investment Scheme Evaluation was published in Welsh and English on the Wales Rural Network site and the Welsh Government Knowledge and Analytical Services webpage to maximise its reach.
<b>Overall organiser of activity/ event</b>	The Research and Monitoring evaluation team worked with the Wales Rural network and other Welsh Government staff to publish the reports.
<b>Information channels/</b>	The reports were published on the Welsh Government Statistics and Research



<b>format used</b>	Webpage and the Wales Rural Network website.
<b>Type of target audience</b>	It is the aim that the publication on the Welsh Governments Statistics and research webpage would reach other research and academic stakeholders while the Wales Rural Network webpage would allow better engagement with rural stakeholders.
<b>Approximate number of stakeholders reached</b>	17
<b>URL</b>	<a href="https://www.gov.wales/timber-business-investment-scheme-tbis-evaluation">https://www.gov.wales/timber-business-investment-scheme-tbis-evaluation</a>

**2.g) Description of the follow-up given to evaluation results (in relation to section 6 of the evaluation plan)**

Reference shall be made to the evaluation plan, any difficulties encountered in implementation shall be described, together with solutions adopted or proposed.

<p><b>Evaluation result relevant for follow-up (Describe finding &amp; mention source in brackets)</b></p>	<p>In the evaluation of the knowledge transfer, innovation and advisory services programme final report, it was noted that there was evidence of the programme promoting innovation, for example, through the Diversification and Innovation Show in October 2019 which attracted 1,500 attendees. Whilst planning of the event took place during the evaluation period, the event itself was held after the evaluation period and therefore the activity could not be evaluated.</p>
<p><b>Follow-up carried out</b></p>	<p>Based on the findings of the report, the Strategy team commissioned a follow-up impact evaluation of Farming Connect to explore the issues identified further. This was commissioned in 2022, with the final report delivered in 2023. The report is going through the final approval and sign off stage and will be published on the Wales Rural Network website in due course. <a href="https://www.gov.wales/evaluation-leader-wales">https://www.gov.wales/evaluation-leader-wales</a></p>
<p><b>Responsible authority for follow-up</b></p>	<p>Managing authority</p>

### **3. ISSUES WHICH AFFECT THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PROGRAMME AND THE MEASURES TAKEN**

#### **3.a) Description of steps taken to ensure quality and effectiveness of programme implementation**

##### **Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC)**

The WG has established a single Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) for Wales European Structural and Investment (ESI) Fund programmes. The All Wales ESI PMC was officially constituted on 5 December 2014 following approval of the Structural Funds programmes and was formally established for the WGRC-RDP 2014-2020 in May 2015 following EC approval of the Programme. During 2023 the PMC met twice. The January meeting was held virtually. The May 2023 meeting was held in person at the Welsh Government offices in Cardiff. This meeting was attended by our European Commission Desk Officers, and the WRN organised site visits to showcase the RDP work in Wales.

##### **Modifications**

The sixth and final modification to the programme was adopted by the commission in November 2023. It solely focused on the financial aspects of the programme, aligned the financial allocation to sub measures and focus areas to ensure the optimal/complete utilisation of the European funds available to us.

##### **Covid, Brexit, Ukraine and the Cost of Living Crisis**

During the delivery of this programme, we have faced some unprecedented challenges that have impacted significantly on programme delivery. We are continuing to feel the effects of the worldwide Covid 19 pandemic, alongside Brexit, the conflict in Ukraine and the cost of living crisis have presented many challenges in programme delivery leaving some schemes and projects with a delay in implementation and claims. Where it has been possible the Welsh Government have accommodated this by extending deadlines and working with the customer / community to support IT issues.

The lasting effects of of the many challenges faced has meant a delay in implementation of the projects on the ground, in the socio economic measures, including tourism and cooperation related projects and in the agri based capital based projects, where rising costs of machinery and equipment have posed barriers to implementation.

The Tourism schemes in particular have been significantly impacted by the COVID pandemic, which in effect shut down the tourism industry for almost 2 years. Combined with difficulties in supply chains and labour, a decision was made to close the scheme as spend would not have been realised. This in turn has affected performance indicators in those areas. The money allocated, was however diverted to COVID recovery schemes.

We have also noted the rising cost and lack of availability of capital items, and commodities instrumental to investment schemes due to the cost of living crisis. These have had a large impact on the ability to deliver projects within the given time frames and allocated budgets.

We understand that our targets have been ambitious, and we have looked at them each time we have made a financial amendment. However, at these times, we were still engaging, encouraging and supporting individuals and businesses to consider and apply for our schemes. Farming Connect, and the Farm Liaison Service met and signposted potential applicants towards the funding that we had available.

The targets for the indicators were set back in 2014 / 2015, since this time, the UK and Wales have faced unprecedented challenges:

These have all had a significant impact on the delivery of our schemes and supply chains. And the programme refocused on helping those more vulnerable in our communities.

### **Target Indicators**

In regards to progress / achievement against target indicator we have noted barriers to progress in some specific areas, and amendments to calculating achievements in others have needed to change.

T16 - Total investment in renewable energy production under focus area 5C ended at €3.66m. Investment against measure 7, RCDF and submeasure 8.6, Timber Business Investment Scheme. Upon investigation, it would appear that the schemes that should have been reporting to 5C were reporting to 6A at the beginning of the programme. This continued for three windows of the scheme. It became apparent to the Scheme Management Unit, but the IT systems did not have the function to reallocate to the correct FA. To reallocate the projects to the correct FA would have meant a rebuild of the IT system, which would have added considerable delay to the schemes delivering under the RDP banner. The other option was to begin the application process again, and all applicants would have had to reapply etc. The work they had already started would have been retrospective and become ineligible expenditure. Scheme Management Unit took a decision at that time in 2018 to ensure that beneficiaries were not subject to any disruption and were able to continue to deliver the Wales RDP main objectives as agreed. This was a prudent decision, as in 2020 we had the unprecedented challenges of COVID 19, followed by the Cost of Living Crisis, which would have impinged on the programmes successful delivery.

Following the transfer of the Monitoring Unit, an in-depth review was undertaken across all indicators. In Jan 2022, this error was found and duly reported via AIR 2021. We understood from the commission that we could not change any indicators at this stage and to provide narrative to yourselves for justification.

During the programme lifetime, the UK government opened FITS, which was a highly incentivised programme aimed at consumers signing up to a UK wide renewable energy scheme. This had a knock on effect to the RDP.

T20 - Jobs created in supported projects under focus area 6A. The actual number of jobs created is 373.3 out of 765 initially targeted. The gender breakdown of these further jobs were unavailable for us to interrogate and include within the data. Therefore we have estimated the breakdown of these jobs, extrapolating from the known data that 4.9% are females, and 95.1% are male.

We noted during the 2022 reporting year that **this target of 765 is ambitious**. Interrogation of the data had shown that the tourism schemes that were delivered under sub measure 6.4 had a final target of 705. The scheme has achieved 246 to date. 19.2 jobs (male) and 1 job (female) are recorded on SFC, 246 has been claimed but there **has been no gender breakdown to enable us to report via SFC**. It has not been possible before the closure of the programme to gain a gender breakdown of the jobs created.

The low achievement rate for this indicator can be explained by the lower performance of the tourism related schemes, which has been significantly impacted by the COVID pandemic and the shutdown of the tourism industry for almost 2 years. Also due to difficulties in supply chains and labour, a decision was made to close the scheme as spend would not have been realised and the remaining funds diverted to COVID recovery windows.

Due to the Covid pandemic the **Cooperation & Supply Chain Development Scheme /Tourism Amenity Support Scheme** (M7.5) was put on hold as priorities within the sector changed with staff moving over onto emergency funding schemes which resulted in being unable to further commit to new funding rounds for the remaining budget.

As with T24, the baseline for population on this target indicator is the whole population of Wales (3,034,975), as opposed to the rural areas that would have been able to benefit from the RDP funding (1,381,745). Again, we believe it is the rural population that should be set as the baseline for this indicator. This came to light as we were preparing the 2021 AIR for submission.

The actual target on this indicator is 1,381,745 which is the population of Wales that is covered by a LAG.

T24 - The **rural population benefiting from new or improved services/infrastructures (ICT)** stands at 19,005 absolute value, which is much lower than the output indicator established for 2023, (i.e., 500,000). Hence, the achieved 1.38% lays far below the 16.47% initially planned (T24).

We have emphasised that for T24, in SFC the formula included there ignores 'other than broadband'. While this is in line with the target fiche that was agreed back in 2015, the rural population benefiting from services should, include both figures. For instance, at the end of 2023, there were 11,477 benefited from improved Broadband services, and 112,399 benefiting from services, other than broadband.

The baseline population figure for this Target Indicator is 3,034,975, which represents the whole population of Wales, rather than the rural population of 1,381,745 that would have been eligible to benefit from RDP funding. On that basis we consider it is the rural population figure that should act as the baseline for this indicator. This came to light in 2022 when preparing to submit the 2021 AIR report. We were advised, at this point, to provide explanation and justification for this underperformance in the AIR narrative, Section 3 for 2021.

Further interrogation would suggest that it was only sub measure 7.3 that fed into this target indicator. The RCDF scheme that was operated under this measure was closed in 2018/2019 and the funds were realigned to measure 16 in modification 3. As far as we are aware we were not advised by the commission at that time for the need to realign the indicator figures alongside the financials. There was an assumption by Welsh Government that the indicators could be realigned later in the programme. However, this proved to be incorrect.

The RCDF Programme was closed early because the policy officials at the time could not provide the necessary incentives, as the private sector and government has opened more appealing domestically funded schemes to help with broadband connectivity. To ensure maximisation of the funds the transfer to measure 16 was seen as the optimum solution to ensure community, social, community and economic and environmental capacity and capability was achieved for the benefit of the rural communities and businesses of Wales.

T2 – Total number of cooperation operations supported under the cooperation measure (Article 35 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013) (groups, networks/clusters, pilot projects...) under focus area 1B was 422 at the end of the programme. Improved interrogation of the data has ensured that we are now reporting correctly against this indicator. It has been noted, and amended that in 2019, there was potential double counting. The target for this indicator, as set out in the sixth iteration of the programme is 478. A number of projects delivered under the CSCDS umbrella. We did not fully achieve this target indicator, however with the addition of the CSCDS projects that were supported as part of the Covid recovery windows we

have achieved 88.28% of the original target.

T8 – The realised percentage of forest / other woodland area under management contracts supporting biodiversity is 0.37%, (i.e., absolute value of 1,154.41 ha against a baseline value of 311,050 ha for forest and other woodland land in Wales).

Further investigations showed that there was a mistake in the methodology used to calculate the target and its subsequent progress. Initially, the methodology was based on total area (ha) supported, meaning the original target set at the beginning of the programme was incorrect and too high, this in turn as the programme proceeded would always be we would underperform. This was coupled by an overly ambitious target in the first instance. In 2022 the Commission informed us that we had been using an incorrect methodology and advised any future reporting should be calculated on maximum area supported, not total land supported figures.. This inevitably resulted in showing a lower area under intervention when in practise the higher of land under intervention is higher than what the new figures are showing. This is a reoccurring issue for T8, T10 and T19.

The target for this indicator was 8,400 ha supported, representing 2.70% of the UAA.

Achievement – Total Land area (ha) – 11,619.70 ha supported, representing 3.74%

Achievement – Max Land Area (ha) – 1,154.41 ha supported, representing 0.37% of the UAA supported.

In addition, conversations with the policy officials, were held regularly throughout the programme to try and mitigate underperformance. Welsh Government opened up windows to stimulate activity. (regardless of methodology used). This action was significantly hampered by the COVID 19 pandemic and thereafter as officers could not access land to undertake woodland management plans, which led to a delay in final contracts being approved.

Furthermore, there was a critical shortage of saplings for planting, and labour, this combined with spirally capital costs increases meant that contracts were not signed as the seasonal window had passed.. These challenges were maintained from 2020 onwards and added to in 22 / 23 by the unprecedented rise in capital costs.

Following the internal integration of the data for the Glastir Woodland Creation, which was funded under M8.1 (support for afforestation/creation of woodland) & 8.2 (support for establishment and maintenance of agro-forestry systems ) revealed that it has been reporting to the wrong indicator under focus area, ie. Indicator T9 (% of agricultural land under management contracts supporting biodiversity and/or landscapes) which has surpassed the planned target (123%). Reporting should had been made to T8 (% of forest/other wooded area under management contracts supporting biodiversity) which resulted in an aggravation of the underachievement for this indicator (14%).

Glastir Woodland Management - legacy – funded under sub-measure M8.5 (support for investments improving the resilience and environmental value of forest ecosystems) should had been reported to focus area 4a FORESTRY (T8, 14%) & FA5e (T19, 59%). Instead again this land was already classed as woodland on the maps it was reported as such (T9, 123% and T18,151%).

Schemes funded under M8.3 (support for prevention of damage to forests from forest fires and natural disasters and catastrophic events) have reported to focus area 4a FORESTRY (T8, 14%) and 5E (T19,59%).

These incorrect allocations were found out in Dec 2023, because of these queries, and unfortunately at this stage, due to the systems in place, we cannot reappportion to the correct FA.

T10 – The realised **percentage of agricultural land under management contracts to improve water management** is 6.16% of agricultural land under management contracts to improve water management, (i.e., absolute value of 87,763.6 ha against a baseline value of 1,423,910 ha), which represents a 45% achievement against the set target (13.83%)

There was a delay in the uptake of the schemes due to supply chain issues, which include labour and COVID-19. To address these constraints the MA had targeted investment windows to support water quality that had however only contributed moderately to this indicator.

As above, investigations show that there was a mistake in the methodology used to calculate the target and its subsequent progress. Initially, the methodology was based on total area (ha) supported, and again the targets were set using total value not maximum value methodologies, resulting in over estimation of target. We were alerted by the commission in 2022, we had been using an incorrect methodology. Inevitably this would mean that there was a higher figure of land under intervention than what is being shown.

Our target set was 196,947.94 ha supported, representing 13.83% of the UAA

Achievement – Total Land area (ha) – 269,991.50 ha supported, representing 14.75%

Achievement – Max Land Area (ha) – 87,762.43 ha supported, representing 6.16% of the UAA supported.

Additional action in 2019 was undertaken, and a targeted SPG window to support water management was opened. This was well received, however, all schemes that were demand led faced the unprecedented challenges of COVID 19 pandemic, labour and supply chain issues remained present throughout the remaining part of the RDP programme, therefore making it difficult to achieve.

T23 –Jobs created in supported projects (Leader) (focus area 6B). Throughout the lifetime of the programme we have recorded 25.31 jobs (male) and 41.61 jobs (female). A total of 66.92 jobs, against an original target of 100.

We have worked closely with the LAGS throughout the lifetime of the programme. We have met regularly with representatives, who have constantly forecast to achieve the targets. We have had no concerns that they would not achieve 100%.

However there have been a number of factors that have happened during the delivery period. Following Brexit, and its impact on labour and supply chains, seriously hampered this ambition to achieve 100 jobs created. In 2020, the COVID 19 pandemic significantly impacted resources across Wales, UK and Europe. A communication from the commission enabled Wales to ask the Local Action Groups to refresh their Local Development Strategies to meet the immediate emerging priorities. The focus shifted from jobs created to jobs safeguarded and secondly to providing valuable and essential access to services. We believe this was a period of innovation and leadership, strengthening local supply chains and the circular green economy, retaining monies in the local areas, the benefits of which are still visible today.

It is noted that we have overachieved against a number of the target indicators. T4, T1, T3, 9, T15, T18, and T6. The demand for these schemes and interventions have been a lot higher than originally anticipated when setting targets against each of the given indicators.

During the final year of RDP implementation, the Scheme Management Unit undertook a programme wide

exercise to terminate any projects that would not deliver their project within the given timescales. This is evident from the warning messages generated by SFC against measures 4, 8 and 7.

The error message against measure 1 was due to the early termination of a food project. An audit that took place earlier on in the programme deemed that the activity and expenditure within this project was ineligible for RDP funding. The project was terminated early, and therefore no longer could be counted as an operation supported.

T19 – The percentage of Agricultural and Forest Land under management contracts contributing to Carbon Sequestration / Conservation (ha). Please see explanation above for the underachievement against this target indicator.

Measure 8.1 Negative figures for spend against this submeasure in focus area P4 (-€8,097,237.90) and 5e (-€3,405,660.35) have been noted in the financial annexes. These have been included to rectify over declarations that have been included in previous Annual Implementation Reports.

## **Error Rates**

### Error Rates (EAFRD IACS)

The 2023 error rates are based on the claims submitted in the 2022 year.

For Measure 08 there were 28 (€3,310.28) cases subject to reduction, of which 23 (between 5 beneficiaries to a value of €2,323.38) were identified at inspection. The average reduction was for a value of €110.72. The majority of reductions were due to non respect of contractual commitments.

For Measure 10 there were 141 (€99,631.29) cases subject to reduction, of which 66 (€55,160.45) were identified at inspection. The average reduction was for a value of €706.60 and 99% of the reduction (€99,178.09) was due to beneficiaries not respecting their contractual commitments as opposed to over declaring areas.

There were 17 cases where the reduction was in excess of €1,000, 13 of which were identified at inspection. The most significant reduction (€11,598.21) was applied to a single beneficiary under the Glastir Commons Scheme for failing to respect their contractual requirements.

For Measure 11 there were 55 (€2,666.16) cases subject to reduction, of which 31 (€1,693.35) were identified at inspection. The average reduction was for a value of €48.48, and of the 55 cases, 9 were significant enough to result in an over-declaration penalty.

The most common cause of reduction was over declaration of land area (48 cases), with the remainder due to beneficiaries not respecting their contractual commitments.

The error rate for measures 08, 10 and 11 are low and administrative checks are generally effective at identifying beneficiary error.

Due to the error rate for Measure 10 falling below the 2% level the inspection rate for 2023 could be reduced to the 5% minimum requirement.

### **EAFRD Non IACS**

For the 2022 claim year the Paying Agency applied the inspection rates as required from the results of the



2021 calendar year.

For EAFRD Non IACS 2020 there were 197 (€954,287.5) cases subject to reduction, of which 13 (€25,268.37) were identified at inspection. The average reduction was for a value of €4,844.10) and of the 197 cases, 23 were significant enough to result in an over-declaration penalty.

The most significant reduction (€152,176.7) occurred in a Measure 20 project where a transaction was removed pending the approval of the expenditure register.

The inspection rate should be maintained at the 5% level.

## Aid Recovered

### RDP 2014-2020 - Aid Recovered and Reallocated 01.01.2023 to 31.12.2023

Sub Measure	Focus Area		Value (EUR)	Value (GBP)
4.2	3a	-	671,502.57 -	590,013.09
<b>4.2 Total</b>		-	<b>671,502.57 -</b>	<b>590,013.09</b>
4.4	5d	-	5,911.31 -	5,072.81
	P4	-	166,417.69 -	143,335.40
<b>4.4 Total</b>		-	<b>172,329.00 -</b>	<b>148,408.21</b>
8.1	5e	-	4,492.60 -	3,842.23
	P4	-	33,778.99 -	29,367.49
<b>8.1 Total</b>		-	<b>38,271.59 -</b>	<b>33,209.72</b>
8.4	5e	-	7,826.64 -	6,825.60
<b>8.4 Total</b>		-	<b>7,826.64 -</b>	<b>6,825.60</b>
8.5	5e	-	7,957.60 -	6,818.71
	P4	-	13,233.60 -	11,395.00
<b>8.5 Total</b>		-	<b>21,191.20 -</b>	<b>18,213.71</b>
10.1	5d	-	20,082.06 -	17,216.02
	5e	-	1,790.69 -	1,536.83
	P4	-	326,947.51 -	282,546.79
<b>10.1 Total</b>		-	<b>348,820.26 -</b>	<b>301,299.64</b>
11.1	P4	-	8,596.37 -	7,705.95
<b>11.1 Total</b>		-	<b>8,596.37 -</b>	<b>7,705.95</b>
11.2	P4	-	104,199.99 -	88,894.25
<b>11.2 Total</b>		-	<b>104,199.99 -</b>	<b>88,894.25</b>
16.2	6b	-	107,202.22 -	93,502.25
<b>16.2 Total</b>		-	<b>107,202.22 -</b>	<b>93,502.25</b>
16.5	P4	-	59,212.41 -	51,456.76
<b>16.5 Total</b>		-	<b>59,212.41 -</b>	<b>51,456.76</b>
19.2	6b	-	6,198.13 -	5,491.49
<b>19.2 Total</b>		-	<b>6,198.13 -</b>	<b>5,491.49</b>
20.2	zz	-	3,701.26 -	3,144.63

<b>20.2 Total</b>	-	<b>3,701.26 -</b>	<b>3,144.63</b>
	-		
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1,549,051.64</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,348,165.30</b>
<b>To note:</b>			
<b>Total of New RD Plan (2014-2020)</b>			
<b>recovered debts only</b>			
<b>All debt recoveries from 01.01.2023 to</b>			
<b>31.12.2023</b>			

### 3.b) Quality and efficient delivery mechanisms

Simplified Cost Options (SCOs) <sup>1</sup>, proxy automatically calculated

	Total RDP financial allocation [EAFRD]	[%] planned SCO coverage out of the total RDP allocation <sup>2</sup>	[%] realised expenditure through SCO out of total RDP allocation (cumulative <sup>3</sup> )
Fund specific methods CPR Article 67(5)(e)	651,590,163.00	42.50	42.62

<sup>1</sup> Simplified Cost Options shall be intended as unit cost/flat rates/lumps sums CPR Article 67(5) including the EAFRD specific methods under point (e) of that article such as business start-up lump sums, flat rate payments to producers organisations and area and animal related unit costs.

<sup>2</sup> Automatically calculated from programme version's measures 06, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18

<sup>3</sup> Automatically calculated from declarations of expenditure's measures 06, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18

Simplified Cost Options (SCOs), based on specific detailed MS data [optional]

	Total RDP financial allocation [EAFRD]	[%] planned SCO coverage out of the total RDP allocation	[%] realised expenditure through SCO out of total RDP allocation (cumulative)
Total CPR Article 67(1)(b)(c)(d) + 67(5)(e)	651,590,163.00		
Fund specific methods CPR Article 67(5)(e)	651,590,163.00		

E-management for beneficiaries [optional]

	[%] EAFRD funding	[%] Operations concerned
Application for support		
Payment claims		
Controls and compliance		
Monitoring and reporting to the MA/PA		

Average time limits for beneficiaries to receive payments [optional]

[Days] Where applicable, MS deadline for payments to	[Days] Average time for payments to beneficiaries	Comments

beneficiaries		

## **4. STEPS TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND PROGRAMME PUBLICITY REQUIREMENTS**

### **4.a) Action taken and state of play as regards the establishment of the NRN and the implementation of its action plan**

4.a1) Actions taken and state of play as regards establishment of the NRN (governance structure and network support unit)

#### **GOVERNANCE**

The Wales Rural Network (WRN) is a partnership of organisations, enterprises, administrations, and individuals open to any stakeholder with an interest in rural development. Stakeholders are involved in the governance and activities of the WRN through the external Steering Group (see below).

#### **WALES RURAL NETWORK SUPPORT UNIT (WRNSU)**

This update covers the period from 1st January to 31st December.

##### **Network Support Unit Staff**

The Wales Rural Network Manager has responsibility for networking and communication across the Rural Development Programme.

The WRNSU currently comprises of a Head of Network (0.5FTE) supported by one Network Manager (0.8FTE), one Website Manager & Content Author (1 FTE) and a Finance Manager (1 FTE). A second Network Manager (0.8 FTE) was in place until 30th September 2022 when a promotion was achieved and was moved to another post.

The WRNSU's role has continued to evolve over the last 12 months. COVID-19 changed the way we work, with a greater focus on digital communications and sharing of best practice amongst stakeholders.

The WRNSU continue to maintain strong relationships with the Local Action Groups and Policy Leads, facilitating the networking process and the engagement of stakeholders by sharing information, best practice and expertise across Wales and the UK. WRNSU organise events, seminars, workshops etc. to inform public and potential beneficiaries about the RDP and the activities it supports.

As December saw the end of the Programme period, the WRNSU role has evolved with a greater emphasis on learning from best practice and the promotion of the projects that have received RDP funding. Further information on our work can be found on the WRN web pages;  
[www.businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork](http://www.businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork)

#### **WALES RURAL NETWORK STEERING GROUP (WRNSG)**

##### **WRN Steering Group**

The WRN Steering Group (SG) was specifically tasked with advising and assisting with the development of a work-plan for WRNSU, which involves stakeholders, improves the quality of RDP implementation, informs the broader public and potential beneficiaries about the RDP, and fosters innovation.

The WRN Steering Group (SG) disbanded at the end of 2022 as the final year of the programme

concentrated on Best Practice case studies with no requirement for future programme planning or training.

#### 4.a2) Actions taken and state of play as regards the implementation of the action plan

The WRN web pages continue to promote all the RDP Socio – Economic measure approved projects.

For a current list of all approved 2014-2020 RDP Socio-Economic projects see: Rural Development Programme Funding | Business Wales - Business Wales (gov.wales)

All LEADER groups in Wales were issued with a profile for the website and must upload the project details once it has been approved by the Local Action Group (LAG). The projects can be viewed by themes and/or areas on our interactive map. The projects also provide contact details, further information and a link to a case study if applicable.

Welsh LEADER Local Action Groups continue to play an active role in supporting their rural communities at this time of unprecedented challenge. LEADER has proven itself to be a useful socio-economic tool in economic recovery following the Covid-19 emergency.

- networking and collaborating to ensure an informed and appropriate approach to meet local needs.

Twenty LEADER operations came to an end during the 2021/2022 Financial Year

A Further 8 LEADER operations came to an end by 30 September 2022.

The remaining operations came to an end on 30 June 2023.

WRNSU continued to monitor spend on a weekly basis and undertake quarterly finance monitoring meetings and collate project reports on a quarterly basis.

<https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/local-action-groups-and-projects>

All other RDP projects are also available on the website and appear on a separate interactive map. These projects can also be viewed online using the search box.

A total of 1,783 RDP funded projects are currently available to view.

Our dedicated WRN Website Manager and Content Author regularly updates the website with news, events, publications and case studies concerning RDP. News and events | Business Wales - Business Wales (gov.wales)

#### **FACILITATION OF THEMATIC AND ANALYTICAL EXCHANGES (ART. 54 3B(II) OF REG. 1305/2013)**

See section 4b for information on publications, website and social media strategy.

## **PROVISION OF TRAINING AND NETWORKING TO LAG (ART. 54 3B(III) OF REG.**

**1305/2013)**

As the projects completed during 2023, LAG areas organised end of term / celebration events, some examples of which are –

End of an era - Farewell to the Swansea Rural Development Programme | Business Wales - Business Wales (gov.wales)

Celebrating LEADER in Caerphilly & Blaenau Gwent | Business Wales - Business Wales (gov.wales)

Awarding the success of LEADER in Ceredigion | Business Wales - Business Wales (gov.wales)

## **PROVISION OF NETWORKING FOR ADVISERS AND INNOVATION SUPPORT**

**SERVICES (ART. 54 3B(IV) OF REG. 1305/2013)**

WRNSU work closely with policy leads to promote and disseminate information to advisors. The knowledge regarding schemes is built up by regular communications and attending meetings with the scheme leads.

**See below, under other, details on the Celebrating Rural Wales event 2022.**

## **SHARING AND DISSEMINATION OF M&E FINDINGS (ART. 54 3B(V) OF REG.**

**1305/2013)**

### **UK National Rural Network (England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales)**

Wales continued to participate in UK NRN teleconference meetings between the four UK NRNs until April 2021 when other regions' Programmes came to an end. These meetings provided an excellent opportunity to discuss RDP stakeholder issues and agree consistent responses to issues affecting the UK as a whole.

- WRN continues to work with colleagues from Scotland around sharing of best practice.
- WRN representatives also attended a Rural Futures meeting in Dublin on 17 November.
- WRN are also involved with regular 4 Nations MA meetings with (England, Scotland & Northern Ireland)

Information and findings are also shared via the WRNSU newsletter and Website see section 4b and <https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/wrn-support-unit/evaluation-and-research>

**THE NETWORK COMMUNICATION PLAN (ART. 54 3B(VI) OF REG. 1305/2013)\* *this***

*point could be treated under following section 4b of the AIR*

## **ACTIVITIES REGARDING THE PARTICIPATION IN AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE**

**ENRD (ART. 54 3B(VII) OF REG. 1305/2013)**

Restrictions have now been put in place by UK Government to cancel some EU activities between the UK and EU due to Brexit. Attending ENRD activities has fallen into this category.

#### **4.b) Steps taken to ensure that the programme is publicised (Article 13 of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014)**

##### **Wales Rural Network: Events & Participation**

Wales delivered its End of Term Event on 9th & 10th June 2022 – Celebrating Rural Wales.

**There was no requirements for events or participation in 2023, following the Celebrating Rural Wales on 9 & 10 June 2022. Celebrating Rural Wales - 9 & 10 June 2022 | Business Wales - Business Wales (gov.wales)**

##### **WRN Communications/Work Plan**

##### **WRN Website / IT Development**

The WRN purpose built website can be found on the Business Wales Platform :  
<https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/>

The website has enabled the WRNSU to continued to improve methods, practices and processes for external communication. External Local Action Groups continue to have responsibility for publishing project examples.

We have a section that consists of two interactive maps, visually promoting all funding awarded to date with details on the relevant projects. The web pages are linked to our social media channels supporting external communication via other channels with at least two pieces of information added to the website on a daily basis. There are 1,783 projects (including LEADER) published on the interactive Project pages, numerous now contain links to live web pages.

There were just below 90,000 website hits from January - December 2023.

The homepage has been updated to include ‘tiles’ or ‘cards’ linking to other Government websites and provides links to pages within our website.

The website now has a new look and place for case studies.  
<https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/case-studies>

Video case studies can be found under “A Celebration of RDP Past & Present”. This provides an ideal place to concentrate on the achievements of the Programme over the years and celebrate the difference that the funding has made for Rural Wales. <https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/celebration-rdp-past-present>

##### **Social Media**

Promotional tweets, re-tweets with quotes and Facebook posts regarding scheme windows and RDP activities are posted daily. This has resulted in Twitter followers increasing by circa.68 to 2035 in 2023 and Facebook seeing a steady increase to 643 followers in 2023. Regular tweets / Facebook posts; re-tweets with quotes and promotional tweets / Facebook posts regarding scheme windows and scheduled on a regular

basis while EOIs are open. A monthly Social Media post goes out to promote a different case study every month.

WRN set up a YouTube playlist within the Welsh Government's main YouTube account and an Instagram account we had 165 followers in 2023. Links can be found below.

The Analytics below show that the number of followers and 'likes' have increased, but the number of hits / posts / engagements has seen a decrease. This is to be expected at this stage in the Programme with fewer events and EOI windows to promote etc. There was just under 90,000 website hits from Jan - December 2023.

**2022 (from March)**

**2023**

**Difference 2022 - 2023**

**No of Website Hits**

113,606

87,922

- 25,684

**No of Twitter Followers**

1968

2035

67

**Tweets**

282

226

- 56

**Twitter Engagement**

527

226

- 301

**No of Facebook Profile Likes**



520

588

68

**No. of followers to the Facebook page**

593

643

50

**Facebook Posts**

360

316

- 44

**Facebook Engagement**

158

135

- 23

**Instagram followers**

116

165

49

**Instagram posts**

78

50

- 28

**Instagram Engagement**

63

31

Links to all WRN social media platforms can be found here:-

Twitter - <https://twitter.com/WalesRuralNet>;

You Tube – Rhwydwaith Gwledig Cymru | Wales Rural Network - YouTube;

Instagram - Instagram

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/walesruralnet>

### **WRNSU Communications & Publicity**

WRNSU continue to approve all press releases and provide external communication support to beneficiaries. Uploads of written & Video Case Studies have significantly increased during 2023 with 41 Case studies written and shared in the period Jan - Dec 2023, resulting in 259 written case studies available on the website plus 144 video case studies.

The WRNSU produced its own newsletter as well as contributing to other publications. These include:

- The WRNSU Newsletter has changed its focus to become the '**Celebrating Rural Success**' **Newsletter** - 6 (3 Welsh language and 3 English language) individual editions were produced between January and December 2023. There were 11,078 WRN Newsletter subscribers in December 2023 across the English and Welsh versions.

<https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/wrn-support-unit/newsletter>

- Gwlad e-newsletter is WG's e-newsletter for Farm and Forestry Businesses and all those involved with agriculture in Wales. Including details on schemes and news stories that target this sector. Gwlad e-newsletter has 17,705 subscribers - 26 updates via Gwlad e-newsletter (13 Welsh language and 13 English language) have been provided between January - December 2023. Climate Change Newsletter, formerly Natural Resources e-Bulletin: Includes the latest legislative and policy updates on the Welsh Government's commitment to our climate, energy, waste, water and land in ways that will protect our natural environment for future generations. The Bulletin has 13,175 subscribers

Two updates to WRN (1 Welsh language and 1 English language)

Climate Change Bulletin October 2022 ([govdelivery.com](http://govdelivery.com))

- Four updates around scheme windows provided to EU Funds newsletters (2 Welsh language and 2 English language) between January - December 2022. EU Funds Bulletin has 13,971 Subscribers.

Six updates (3 Welsh language and 3 English language) for Farming Spring, Summer & Winter newsletter which is launched in spring, Summer and Winter each year. All the above newsletters include a promotional link to the WRN website in each edition.

### **Raising the Profile with Welsh Ministers**

The WRNSU along with the MA and scheme leads ensure that the Welsh Ministers are kept up to date with

EAFRD funding. Funded projects are highlighted to Welsh Ministers at every opportunity.

Regular social media updates on RDP activity are publicised by our ministers.

**Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015)**

The WRNSU as part of the Welsh Government, is obliged to embed the Well-being of Future Generations Act in all aspects of WRNSU work. The Act requires Welsh public bodies to think more about the long-term, to work better with people, communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach – helping us to create a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future.

## **5. ACTIONS TAKEN TO FULFIL EX ANTE CONDITIONALITIES**

This section applies to AIR(s) 2015, 2016 only

## **6. DESCRIPTION OF IMPLEMENTATION OF SUB-PROGRAMMES**

This section applies to AIR(s) 2016, 2018 only

## **7. ASSESSMENT OF THE INFORMATION AND PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME**

This section applies to AIR(s) 2016, 2018 only

**8. IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIONS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE PRINCIPLES SET OUT IN ARTICLES 5, 7 AND 8 OF REGULATION (EU) No 1303/2013**

This section applies to AIR(s) 2016, 2018 only





## **9. PROGRESS MADE IN ENSURING INTEGRATED APPROACH TO USE EAFRD AND OTHER UNION FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS**

This section applies to AIR(s) 2018 only

**10. REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS (ARTICLE 46 OF REGULATION (EU) No 1303/2013)**

30A. Has the ex-ante assessment been started ?	Yes
30B. Has the ex-ante assessment been completed ?	No
30. Date of completion of ex-ante assessment	-
31.1. Has selection or designation process already been launched ?	No
13A. Has the funding agreement been signed ?	No
13. Date of signature of the funding agreement with the body implementing the financial instrument	-

## **11. ENCODING TABLES FOR COMMON AND PROGRAMME-SPECIFIC INDICATORS AND QUANTIFIED TARGET VALUES**

See Monitoring Annex

## Annex II

Detailed table showing implementation level by Focus areas including output indicators

Focus Area 1A							
FA/M	Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2025
1A	T1: percentage of expenditure under Articles 14, 15 and 35 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 in relation to the total expenditure for the RDP (focus area 1A)	2014-2023			26.78	101.97	26.26
		2014-2022			19.47	74.14	
		2014-2021			13.93	53.04	
		2014-2020			10.04	38.23	
		2014-2019			6.74	25.67	
		2014-2018			3.76	14.32	
		2014-2017			1.19	4.53	
		2014-2016					
2014-2015							

Focus Area 1B							
FA/M	Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2025
1B	T2: Total number of cooperation operations supported under the cooperation measure (Article 35 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013) (groups, networks/clusters, pilot projects...) (focus area 1B)	2014-2023			422.00	88.28	478.00
		2014-2022			324.00	67.78	
		2014-2021			230.00	48.12	
		2014-2020			176.00	36.82	
		2014-2019			86.00	17.99	
		2014-2018			60.00	12.55	
		2014-2017			2.00	0.42	
		2014-2016					
2014-2015							

**Focus Area 1C**

FA/M	Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2025
1C	T3: Total number of participants trained under Article 14 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 (focus area 1C)	2014-2023			104,288.00	309.31	33,716.00
		2014-2022			98,396.00	291.84	
		2014-2021			86,231.00	255.76	
		2014-2020			57,944.50	171.86	
		2014-2019			22,587.00	66.99	
		2014-2018			10,079.00	29.89	
		2014-2017			5,021.00	14.89	
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					

Focus Area 2A							
FA/M	Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2025
2A	T4: percentage of agricultural holdings with RDP support for investments in restructuring or modernisation (focus area 2A)	2014-2023	15.63	155.08	15.63	155.08	10.08
		2014-2022	14.90	147.84	14.90	147.84	
		2014-2021	13.07	129.68	13.07	129.68	
		2014-2020	10.18	101.00	10.18	101.00	
		2014-2019	6.50	64.49	6.50	64.49	
		2014-2018	2.99	29.67	1.47	14.59	
		2014-2017	0.29	2.88	0.07	0.69	
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					
FA/M	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
2A	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	96,457,275.98	96.32	75,728,608.75	75.62	100,145,705.56
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	35,270,775.27	97.94	36,333,010.33	100.89	36,013,862.92
M01.1	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023			5,509,237.38	143.82	3,830,684.80
M01.1	O12 - Number of participants in trainings	2014-2023			18,667.88	186.49	10,010.00
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	8,549,561.71	98.61	8,671,168.32	100.01	8,670,222.23
M02.1	O13 - Number of beneficiaries advised	2014-2023			5,978.18	201.76	2,963.00
M04	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	52,018,189.00	137.58	30,177,664.04	79.81	37,809,658.69
M04	O2 - Total investment	2014-2023			75,444,160.10	79.81	94,524,145.00
M04.1	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023			30,177,664.04	79.81	37,809,657.54
M04.1	O4 - Number of holdings/beneficiaries supported	2014-2023			3,770.00	155.08	2,431.00
M04.3	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023			0.00	0.00	1.15
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	618,750.00	3.51	546,766.06	3.10	17,651,961.72

Focus Area 2B							
FA/M	Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2025
2B	T5: percentage of agricultural holdings with RDP supported business development plan/investments for young farmers (focus area 2B)	2014-2023					0.73
		2014-2022					
		2014-2021					
		2014-2020					
		2014-2019					
		2014-2018					
		2014-2017					
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					
FA/M	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
2B	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	2,852,715.01				
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	2,240,943.91				
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	611,771.10				

Focus Area 3A							
FA/M	Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2025
3A	T6: percentage of agricultural holdings receiving support for participating in quality schemes, local markets and short supply circuits, and producer groups/organisations (focus area 3A)	2014-2023	2.65	387.38	2.65	387.38	0.68
		2014-2022	0.76	111.10	0.76	111.10	
		2014-2021	0.76	111.10	0.76	111.10	
		2014-2020	0.76	111.10	0.76	111.10	
		2014-2019	0.70	102.33	0.70	102.33	
		2014-2018	2.11	308.44	0.41	59.93	
		2014-2017					
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					
FA/M	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
3A	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	137,016,750.10	110.74	124,811,520.04	100.88	123,725,426.28
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	54,040,190.23	95.22	57,793,272.74	101.84	56,750,384.42
M01.1	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023			55,791,729.03	102.07	54,660,567.66
M01.1	O12 - Number of participants in trainings	2014-2023			75,969.20	446.98	16,996.00
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	791,518.79	89.15	887,984.37	100.01	887,887.58
M02.1	O13 - Number of beneficiaries advised	2014-2023			614.00	202.64	303.00
M04	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	75,790,531.11	122.28	61,495,647.39	99.22	61,979,492.60
M04	O2 - Total investment	2014-2023			193,059,215.66	124.60	154,948,731.50
M04.1 M04.2	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2023			109.00	90.83	120.00
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	6,394,509.97	155.67	4,634,615.54	112.83	4,107,661.68
M16.4	O9 - Number of holdings participating in supported schemes	2014-2023			638.00	386.67	165.00



Priority P4								
FA/M	Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2025	
P4	T13: percentage of forestry land under management contracts to improve soil management and/or prevent soil erosion (focus area 4C)	2014-2023					0.00	
		2014-2022						
		2014-2021						
		2014-2020						
		2014-2019						
		2014-2018						
		2014-2017						
		2014-2016						
		2014-2015						
	T11: percentage of forestry land under management contracts to improve water management (focus area 4B)	2014-2023						0.00
		2014-2022						
		2014-2021						
		2014-2020						
		2014-2019						
		2014-2018						
		2014-2017						
		2014-2016						
	2014-2015							
	T8: percentage of forest/other wooded area under management contracts supporting biodiversity (focus area 4A)	2014-2023				0.37	13.70	2.70
		2014-2022				0.37	13.70	
		2014-2021				0.99	36.66	
		2014-2020				0.83	30.73	
		2014-2019				0.77	28.51	
		2014-2018				0.75	27.77	
		2014-2017				0.23	8.52	
		2014-2016				0.20	7.41	
		2014-2015				0.01	0.37	
	T12: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts to improve soil management and/or prevent soil erosion (focus area 4C)	2014-2023				4.66	93.47	4.99
		2014-2022				4.66	93.47	
		2014-2021				4.89	98.09	
		2014-2020				4.81	96.48	
		2014-2019				4.75	95.28	
2014-2018					4.46	89.46		
2014-2017					4.46	89.46		
2014-2016					4.36	87.45		
2014-2015								

	T10: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts to improve water management (focus area 4B)	2014-2023			6.16	44.54	13.83
		2014-2022			6.16	44.54	
		2014-2021			6.92	50.03	
		2014-2020			6.90	49.89	
		2014-2019			6.62	47.86	
		2014-2018			6.22	44.97	
		2014-2017			6.22	44.97	
		2014-2016			3.14	22.70	
		2014-2015					
	T9: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts supporting biodiversity and/or landscapes (focus area 4A)	2014-2023			47.83	123.42	38.75
		2014-2022			47.81	123.37	
		2014-2021			64.48	166.38	
		2014-2020			63.19	163.06	
		2014-2019			54.82	141.46	
		2014-2018			44.72	115.40	
		2014-2017			44.72	115.40	
		2014-2016			20.94	54.03	
		2014-2015			1.60	4.13	
FA/M	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
P4	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	527,325,127.59	112.11	476,560,035.09	101.31	470,379,700.59
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	7,752,461.11	156.37	8,486,813.00	171.18	4,957,694.96
M01.1	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023			4,884,034.23	408.36	1,196,024.79
M01.1	O12 - Number of participants in trainings	2014-2023			6,544.96	396.66	1,650.00
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	3,248,854.64	93.54	3,472,452.06	99.98	3,473,111.13
M02.1	O13 - Number of beneficiaries advised	2014-2023			1,634.00	64.46	2,535.00
M04	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	90,950,447.41	164.90	55,875,234.47	101.31	55,154,016.92
M04	O2 - Total investment	2014-2023			55,875,234.47	101.31	55,154,016.92
M04.4	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2023			9,804.00	88.16	11,120.41
M08	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	29,124,577.87	165.24	19,679,536.40	111.65	17,625,497.04
M08.1	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023			14,195,143.65	98.96	14,344,624.85
M08.1	O5 - Total area (ha)	2014-2023			2,381.56	95.34	2,498.00

M08.2	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023			3,062.79	30.63	10,000.00
M08.2	O5 - Total area (ha)	2014-2023			0.47	0.94	50.00
M08.3	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023			315,890.41	400.00	78,972.60
M08.3	O4 - Number of holdings/beneficiaries supported	2014-2023			1.00	100.00	1.00
M08.5	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023			5,165,439.55	161.83	3,191,899.59
M08.5	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2023			577.00	143.18	403.00
M08.5	O5 - Total area (ha)	2014-2023			4,291.75	51.09	8,400.00
M10	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	329,092,525.09	100.56	326,966,862.70	99.91	327,273,975.33
M10.1	O5 - Total area (ha)	2014-2023			139,025.39	21.88	635,399.00
M11	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	37,224,580.90	100.75	37,224,580.57	100.75	36,947,697.63
M11.1	O5 - Total area (ha)	2014-2023					11,153.00
M11.2	O5 - Total area (ha)	2014-2023			55,688.07	97.21	57,287.00
M15	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	0.00				
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	29,931,680.57	119.98	24,854,555.89	99.63	24,947,707.58

Focus Area 5B							
FA/M	Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2025
5B	T15: Total investment for energy efficiency (€) (focus area 5B)	2014-2023	15,263,598.45	119.83	15,263,598.45	119.83	12,737,428.01
		2014-2022	15,123,587.50	118.73	15,123,587.50	118.73	
		2014-2021	14,772,957.65	115.98	14,772,957.65	115.98	
		2014-2020	14,254,387.60	111.91	14,254,387.60	111.91	
		2014-2019	13,996,168.15	109.88	13,996,168.15	109.88	
		2014-2018	11,587,950.75	90.98	9,380,795.88	73.65	
		2014-2017	1,586,895.45	12.46	1,586,895.45	12.46	
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					
FA/M	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
5B	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	13,205,014.85	201.69	7,568,365.76	115.60	6,547,307.39
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	900,853.54	96.30	945,347.62	101.06	935,425.01
M01.1	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023			144,730.10	145.46	99,498.31
M01.1	O12 - Number of participants in trainings	2014-2023			484.88	186.49	260.00
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	240,771.00	98.61	244,195.75	100.01	244,169.08
M02.1	O13 - Number of beneficiaries advised	2014-2023			170.30	205.18	83.00
M04	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	11,754,015.31	230.70	6,105,439.38	119.83	5,094,971.20
M04	O2 - Total investment	2014-2023			15,263,598.45	119.83	12,737,428.01
M04.1 M04.2 M04.3	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2023			1,067.00	373.08	286.00
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	309,375.00	113.43	273,383.01	100.23	272,742.10

Focus Area 5C							
FA/M	Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2025
5C	T16: Total investment in renewable energy production (€) (focus area 5C)	2014-2023	3,655,841.72	22.47	3,655,841.72	22.47	16,268,534.96
		2014-2022	3,264,583.48	20.07	3,264,583.48	20.07	
		2014-2021	2,414,357.44	14.84	2,414,357.44	14.84	
		2014-2020	2,195,851.24	13.50	2,195,851.24	13.50	
		2014-2019	979,025.41	6.02	979,025.41	6.02	
		2014-2018	1,633,794.74	10.04			
		2014-2017					
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					
FA/M	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
5C	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	22,284,988.59	275.63	3,062,524.77	37.88	8,085,144.53
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	900,853.54	96.30	945,347.49	101.06	935,425.01
M01.1	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023			144,730.12	145.46	99,498.31
M01.1	O12 - Number of participants in trainings	2014-2023			484.88	186.49	260.00
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	189,698.93	98.61	192,396.59	100.01	192,375.64
M02.1	O13 - Number of beneficiaries advised	2014-2023			134.60	203.94	66.00
M04	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	18,367,002.28				
M07	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	636,683.54	186.85	317,313.90	93.12	340,745.75
M07.2	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2023			4.00	2.03	197.00
M07.2 M07.3 M07.4 M07.5 M07.6 M07.7 M07.8	O2 - Total investment	2014-2023			823,556.52	201.41	408,894.90
M08	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	1,881,375.30	29.66	1,334,083.75	21.03	6,343,856.03
M08	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2023					100.00
M08.6	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023			1,334,083.75	21.03	6,343,856.03

M08.6	O2 - Total investment	2014-2023			3,244,063.46	20.45	15,859,640.07
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	309,375.00	113.43	273,383.04	100.23	272,742.10

Focus Area 5D							
FA/M	Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2025
5D	T18: percentage of agricultural land under management contracts targeting reduction of GHG and/or ammonia emissions (focus area 5D)	2014-2023			6.35	151.18	4.20
		2014-2022			6.35	151.18	
		2014-2021			8.55	203.56	
		2014-2020			8.33	198.32	
		2014-2019			6.40	152.37	
		2014-2018			4.42	105.23	
		2014-2017			4.42	105.23	
		2014-2016			3.11	74.04	
		2014-2015					
FA/M	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
5D	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	33,831,599.52	137.93	34,371,677.30	140.14	24,527,219.91
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	900,853.54	96.30	945,347.41	101.06	935,425.01
M01.1	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023			144,729.95	145.46	99,498.31
M01.1	O12 - Number of participants in trainings	2014-2023			484.88	186.49	260.00
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	1,695,613.03	98.61	1,719,729.90	100.01	1,719,542.28
M02.1	O13 - Number of beneficiaries advised	2014-2023			1,187.24	201.91	588.00
M04	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	19,012,657.43	219.05	17,535,147.02	202.03	8,679,676.22
M04	O2 - Total investment	2014-2023			42,063,059.14	194.76	21,596,953.56
M04.1 M04.3 M04.4	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2023			1,795.00	36.68	4,893.15
M10	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	11,913,100.52	92.21	13,898,069.96	107.57	12,919,834.31
M10.1	O5 - Total area (ha)	2014-2023			85,949.58	143.71	59,807.08
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	309,375.00	113.43	273,383.01	100.23	272,742.10

Focus Area 5E							
FA/M	Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2025
5E	T19: percentage of agricultural and forest land under management contracts contributing to carbon sequestration and conservation (focus area 5E)	2014-2023			0.13	57.78	0.22
		2014-2022			0.13	57.78	
		2014-2021			0.19	84.45	
		2014-2020			0.18	80.00	
		2014-2019			0.18	80.00	
		2014-2018			0.13	57.78	
		2014-2017			0.13	57.78	
		2014-2016			0.03	13.33	
		2014-2015					
FA/M	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
5E	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	38,748,705.21	154.99	21,747,657.51	86.99	25,001,040.29
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	900,853.54	96.30	945,347.68	101.06	935,425.01
M01.1	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023			144,730.17	145.46	99,498.31
M01.1	O12 - Number of participants in trainings	2014-2023			484.88	186.49	260.00
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	693,913.10	127.19	544,893.99	99.88	545,566.74
M02.1	O13 - Number of beneficiaries advised	2014-2023			156.02	47.86	326.00
M04	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	3,410,234.53	63.48	3,395,788.05	63.21	5,372,010.48
M04	O2 - Total investment	2014-2023			3,395,788.05	63.21	5,372,010.48
M04.4	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2023			2,087.00	26.56	7,857.44
M08	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	31,076,032.55	196.53	14,204,159.57	89.83	15,812,195.94
M08.1	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023			8,754,076.13	109.11	8,023,449.64
M08.1	O5 - Total area (ha)	2014-2023			680.83	81.83	832.00
M08.2	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023			0.00	0.00	7,000.00
M08.2	O5 - Total area (ha)	2014-2023					50.00
M08.3	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023			0.00	0.00	236,917.81
M08.4	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023			5,230,620.31	99.63	5,250,222.62

M08.5	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023			219,463.13	9.56	2,294,605.87
M08.5	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2023			192.00	48.85	393.00
M10	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	2,169,731.78	109.05	2,310,424.73	116.12	1,989,709.97
M10.1	O5 - Total area (ha)	2014-2023			1,621.32	53.66	3,021.60
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	497,939.71	143.86	347,043.49	100.26	346,132.15



**Focus Area 6A**

FA/M	Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2025
6A	T20: Jobs created in supported projects (focus area 6A)	2014-2023			20.20	2.64	765.00
		2014-2022			15.20	1.99	
		2014-2021			12.20	1.59	
		2014-2020			12.20	1.59	
		2014-2019			2.00	0.26	
		2014-2018			2.00	0.26	
		2014-2017					
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					
FA/M	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
6A	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	32,255,284.92	301.16	16,225,143.63	151.49	10,710,200.31
M02	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	448,607.33	91.04	492,831.33	100.01	492,777.61
M02.1	O13 - Number of beneficiaries advised	2014-2023			341.66	203.37	168.00
M06	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	18,180,801.04	285.94	6,509,581.32	102.38	6,358,289.23
M06	O2 - Total investment	2014-2023			5,883,947.62	37.02	15,895,723.08
M06.2 M06.4	O4 - Number of holdings/beneficiaries supported	2014-2023			50.00	14.71	340.00
M08	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	10,388,501.18	819.18	6,368,786.82	502.21	1,268,162.24
M08	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2023					20.00
M08.6	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023			6,368,786.82	502.21	1,268,162.24
M08.6	O2 - Total investment	2014-2023			19,904,342.42	627.82	3,170,405.61
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	3,237,375.37	124.95	2,853,944.16	110.15	2,590,971.23

Focus Area 6B								
FA/M	Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2025	
6B	T23: Jobs created in supported projects (Leader) (focus area 6B)	2014-2023			66.92	66.92	100.00	
		2014-2022			43.51	43.51		
		2014-2021			35.11	35.11		
		2014-2020			9.00	9.00		
		2014-2019			4.00	4.00		
		2014-2018			12.00	12.00		
		2014-2017						
		2014-2016						
		2014-2015						
	T22: percentage of rural population benefiting from improved services/infrastructures (focus area 6B)	2014-2023				3.46	7.60	45.53
		2014-2022				3.41	7.49	
		2014-2021				3.35	7.36	
		2014-2020				3.24	7.12	
		2014-2019				0.67	1.47	
		2014-2018				1.93	4.24	
		2014-2017				45.53	100.01	
		2014-2016						
	T21: percentage of rural population covered by local development strategies (focus area 6B)	2014-2023				45.53	100.01	45.53
		2014-2022				45.53	100.01	
		2014-2021				45.53	100.01	
		2014-2020				45.53	100.01	
		2014-2019				45.53	100.01	
		2014-2018				45.53	100.01	
		2014-2017				45.53	100.01	
		2014-2016						
	2014-2015							
	FA/M	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
6B	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	205,969,129.53	126.95	178,867,304.72	110.25	162,239,937.65	
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	4,411,481.77	99.24	216,513.23	4.87	4,445,163.64	
M01.1	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023			216,513.23	5.12	4,229,976.79	
M01.1	O12 - Number of participants in trainings	2014-2023			924.00	23.75	3,890.00	
M07	O1 - Total public	2014-2023	22,976,939.13	108.97	21,124,146.76	100.18	21,086,090.05	

	expenditure						
M07.1	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2023			6.00	33.33	18.00
M07.1 M07.2 M07.4 M07.5 M07.6 M07.7 M07.8	O15 - Population benefiting of improved services/infrastructures (IT or others)	2014-2023			104,871.00	7.59	1,381,745.00
M07.2	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2023			2.00	3.57	56.00
M07.4	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2023			94.00	81.03	116.00
M07.5	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2023			30.00	20.00	150.00
M07.6	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2023			14.00	40.00	35.00
M07.7	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2023			7.00	28.00	25.00
M16	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	117,559,722.10	140.64	104,351,316.63	124.84	83,590,779.26
M19	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	61,020,986.53	114.88	53,175,328.10	100.11	53,117,904.70
M19	O18 - Population covered by LAG	2014-2023			1,381,745.00	100.00	1,381,745.00
M19	O19 - Number of LAGs selected	2014-2023			18.00	100.00	18.00
M19.1	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023			58,171.37	121.68	47,806.11
M19.2	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023			37,000,373.56	100.05	36,980,685.26
M19.3	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023			2,743,575.09	74.00	3,707,629.75
M19.4	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023			13,373,208.08	108.01	12,381,783.58

**Focus Area 6C**

FA/M	Target indicator name	Period	Based on approved (when relevant)	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Target 2025
6C	T24: percentage of rural population benefiting from new or improved services/infrastructures (ICT) (focus area 6C)	2014-2023			0.63	3.82	16.47
		2014-2022			0.62	3.76	
		2014-2021			0.62	3.76	
		2014-2020			0.43	2.61	
		2014-2019					
		2014-2018					
		2014-2017					
		2014-2016					
		2014-2015					
FA/M	Output Indicator	Period	Committed	Uptake (%)	Realised	Uptake (%)	Planned 2023
6C	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	1,982,187.96	145.28	1,392,940.54	102.09	1,364,411.84
M01	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	450,426.78	96.30	472,673.64	101.06	467,712.51
M01.1	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023			72,364.90	145.46	49,749.15
M01.1	O12 - Number of participants in trainings	2014-2023			242.44	186.49	130.00
M07	O1 - Total public expenditure	2014-2023	1,531,761.18	170.82	920,266.90	102.63	896,699.33
M07.3	O15 - Population benefiting of improved services/infrastructures (IT or others)	2014-2023			19,005.00	3.80	500,000.00
M07.3	O3 - Number of actions/operations supported	2014-2023			24.00	150.00	16.00

## Documents

Document title	Document type	Document date	Local reference	Commission reference	Checksum	Files	Sent date	Sent By
AIR Financial Annex 2014UK06RDRP004	Financial annex (System)	08-07-2024			1234461070	AIRfinancialAnnex2014UK06RDRP004_en.pdf		

