

Final Report

Sustainable Skills Cluster for Powys

Written June 2022 so able to reflect on legacy impact of the project alongside direct delivery.

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WHAT WE ORIGINALLY SUBMITTED

. AND NOW REPORT AGAINST.

The project brings together five partners to work collaboratively to establish a Sustainability Skills Cluster for Powys.

The Cluster will triangulate three of the county's strengths in order to forge a USP that will be of benefit to employers, learners, and the wider economy.

NPTC has two centres in the county delivering vocational skills. CAT has a global reputation on sustainability. Cwm Harry and Black Mountains College are pioneering new kinds of community-based training which adapts and adopts existing vocational curricula to widen access to training opportunities in rural communities.

The project aims to knit these three strengths together to examine the feasibility of forging one portal for sustainable skills in Powys with a range of courses, developed in consultation with business and agriculture with the support of Mid Wales Manufacturing Group and Young Farmers Cymru, and delivered at multiple sites across the county.

The development of this partnership in time – based on the development of curricula that deliver sustainable skills - will:

1. Leverage CAT's global reputation as a leader in sustainability to act as a potential umbrella for other providers in Powys.
2. Scale up the community-based delivery being pioneered by Cwm Harry and Black Mountains College
3. Draw in learners from England to increase the viability of course offerings in Powys.
4. Utilise the existing regulatory capacity of NPTC where appropriate to accredit/validate courses and register learners, increasing the number of students on their books.
5. Meet the needs of employers for more sustainability skills.
6. Fill identified, long-standing, gaps in upskilling opportunities for post-16 education in Powys.
7. Support the development of future funding bids.

Executive summary

We face a triple bottom line problem:

- i. **Socially we lose our younger generation from Powys as there are too few opportunities to keep them here. And too few places to learn relevant skills.**
- ii. **Environmentally we face a dual emergency of climate change and biodiversity loss, with the impacts both global and local.**
- iii. **Economically we need a viable economy, but one based on meeting the environmental challenges and providing our younger generations – and indeed our existing workforce - with far greater opportunities.**

Skills – sustainable skills – is one way of tackling all three issues and this project set out to explore what the need was and how it could be better met through a collaboration of five organisations all involved in skills and / or enterprise development.

Through formal research and hands on curriculum development with associated piloting in the fields of construction (retrofit) and land management (regenerative horticulture) we know there is immense need and that we can begin to meet that need

Along the way a wide range of ancillary benefits, partnerships and initiatives were engaged with, animated, or even initiated, all lending weight to the evidence of need and opportunity.

However, we didn't pull off the ambition to find a financially viable way of sustaining the Sustainable Skills Cluster. We retain good – indeed much improved – working relationships and will collaborate more in the future. However, a single 'model' that might make Powys a training destination, attracting young people in and enhancing our position as a great place to live and set up businesses, eluded us.

Whilst making good progress the project identifies the need for continued work on:

- A. **A shared portal and central marketing plan - a kind of 'what's on guide.**
- B. **Ongoing development of courses and curricula, from short course to NVQs all the way up to MA.**
- C. **A platform that enables local businesses and local communities to become part of the training provision.**
- D. **An independent coordinating and driving force that can add value to all partners.**

The partners would like to thank Arwain for giving them the opportunity to pilot this partnership. Good progress was made yet far more is clearly needed if the need is to be met and the potential fulfilled.

The Cluster approach builds a new collaborative platform maximising and sharing expertise, avoiding silos and unproductive competition.

This project aims to lay the groundwork for such a Cluster by:

1. Developing a partnership/Memorandum of Understanding among the parties.
2. Researching the demand for courses and the sustainability needs of different employers, e.g. renewable energy, construction, agriculture, forestry.
3. Researching existing content and course offerings in sustainability to avoid duplication and explore how existing approved curricula on NPTC's City and Guilds register could be further 'greened' or tweaked without the need for new approvals (secondary, post 16, Work-based learning, apprenticeships, NVQs at various levels and HNDs)
4. Identifying gaps based on the demand and needs (identified above)
5. Working collaboratively in the co-creation of tester courses with practitioners (businesses and social enterprises) in Powys
6. Offering pilot courses both within established institutions and in satellite (community and industry based) venues across the county.
7. Research accreditation process options and test delivery model.
8. Develop a financial model with associated financing plan, governance option and marketing plan.
9. Research and position the proposed Cluster within the Mid Wales (and Wales / UK) context to optimise the added value researched and identified.

The Parties commit to working together to develop an independent social enterprise company ("the Social Enterprise"), which will take these ambitions forward.

Key Objectives

1. Research and pilot modules in real world settings.
2. Develop and agree a business model / business plan.
3. Investigate and secure public and private funding streams for the follow-on Social Enterprise / project.
4. Develop marketing and communication strategy for the Project.
5. Establish and set up the Social Enterprise (if need / opportunity identified).

Introduction - story of the project's evolution

During late 2020 Arwain, the LEADER programme for Powys, brought together working groups to consider how remaining funds should be deployed to make best use of the programme's experiences and opportunities already accrued. Two common themes were about sustainability and about skills development. This project brought a new partnership together to consider how a sustainable skills cluster might be formed; one that could help place Powys on the map as a centre of excellence for this work.

Launched within Covid the Sustainable Skills Cluster came together and faced a range of issues including difficulties in recruiting, retaining all partners, Covid lockdowns and existing within a rapidly – and mostly progressively – changing environment as COP26 in Glasgow went by and the climate emergency became more embedded. Not all these circumstances were detrimental, but the need for continual adaptation was necessary.

Value from this project has been added in several places across Mid Wales and farther afield, which are picked up throughout this report. Equally we are emerging from Covid – and its opportunity for bounce back green – with an ever increased 'demand' for sustainable skills. The project may not leave an indelible 'cluster' here and now, but its ambitions and ideas can be found in a range of ongoing activities across the partners and farther afield.

Sustainable Skills – what do we mean?

Powys is challenged to bridge the gap between three substantial needs:

- A. Building and sustaining a viable and vibrant economy in a deeply rural region.
- B. Achieving this within tackling a climate and ecological emergency.
- C. Retaining young people within Powys and attracting a skilled and experienced workforce.

The skills to bridge this gap are ones that give us a workforce that can meet the skills for sustainability that meet A + B + C across fields such as:

- i. ENERGY
 - a. Advancing onshore wind
 - b. Driving the growth of low carbon hydrogen
 - c. Developing Heat and Power networks
- ii. TRANSPORT
 - a. Accelerating the shift to zero emission vehicles
 - b. Green public transport, cycling and walking
 - c. Jet zero and green ships
- iii. CONSTRUCTION
 - a. Retrofit
 - b. Greener building
 - c. Heat pumps
- iv. LAND MANAGEMENT
 - a. Food and farming
 - b. Ecosystem services / biodiversity
 - c. forestry
- v. INNOVATION
 - a. Investing in carbon capture, usage and storage
 - b. Green finance and innovation
 - c. Manufacture for a circular economy



Within this project there was only time and resources within the partnership to pilot in the areas of construction (retrofit) and land management (regenerative horticulture). This project has only begun to touch on the breadth and depth of what is needed to achieve a fully sustainably skilled Powys.

The partnership commissioned a baseline report into sustainable skills across Powys from Wavehill and this offers substantive and meaningful evidence and insights into the breadth and depth of needs and opportunities available to Powys.

Partnership development and staff recruitment

Our network

At the outset the partnership was formed from:

1. Mid Wales Manufacturing Group (MWMG) (acting as lead)
2. Neath Port Talbot College (NPTC) Group of colleges
3. Black Mountains College (BMC)
4. Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT)
5. Cwm Harry Land Trust (CHLT)
6. Young Farmers Cymru (YFC)

With YFC losing their Chief Executive and going through a prolonged recruitment process we had to drop them as a partner, even after substantial effort was put in to retaining them as they awaited the arrival of their new CEO.

All other partners have worked under Partnership Agreement (appendix A) have met regularly online and managed one full day workshop (accommodated as lockdowns were lifted).

Network legacy

For the duration of the project, we sustained this as a network and whilst it is not sustained beyond the project the individual partners advocacy of sustainable skills in a variety of other networks and platforms persist. Example connected 'networks' include:

- i. **Mid Wales Learning and Skills Partnership** where Adrian Watson of CAT was the inaugural chair.
- ii. Wyn Pritchard head of construction at NPTC and chairs **Sero's Training and Skills Group** (overseeing the development of Optimised Retrofit training within Wales). Wyn also sits on a UK-wide retrofit trainers' network in the UK
- iii. **National Nature Service forum** where future skills (and apprenticeships) are being considered by the Welsh Government.
- iv. **Wales' Foundational Economy Skills CoP** (Community of Practice)
- v. **Community Energy Wales'** energy efficiency working group, which is in direct discussions with Welsh Government's Carbon and Communities division on this topic.
- vi. **The Development Trusts Association Wales** picking it up as a component of the new Sustainable Steps programme for communities in Wales working in Climate Change.

The people legacy

Staff recruitment was a mixed bag. Applications to become Project Manager were limited but a Gloucestershire based consultant with local knowledge was appointed to lead the partnership. Sadly, she stepped down due to health reasons and because of the ever-decreasing project operation time her place was taken by Adam Kennerley who was one of the partners and had instigated the partnership and who now leads Wales Development Trust Association which is picking up the skills agenda.

More successful was the appointment of a Curriculum Development Manager as we secured an experienced FE lecturer in the field of construction who was relocating from Milton Keynes to West Wales. Sarah Welham herself had a delayed start as she moved west, but this gave us the time and spare financial resources to instead employ Wavehill to undertake the baseline research. As an example of one of the unintended successes of the project Sarah



was headhunted ahead of the project close by CAT, who were setting up a sustainable skills hub (a positive news story covered below) which is being led in part by Sarah.

Across the partnership there were other key individuals who continue to play important roles in developing and delivering the ambitions of this project, albeit not through this partnership. These include:

- Wyn Pritchard of NPTC who a senior figure in developing retrofit qualifications within Wales.
- Ben Rawlence who continues to lead Black Mountains College into ever increasing practical training delivery.
- Ceri Stephens who continues to lead Mid Wales Manufacturing Group
- Adrian Watson who is Head of School at CAT and Interim Chair Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership
- Eileen Kinsman who during this project stepped in as Interim Co-Chief Executive of CAT and continues to lead their development which includes the Sustainable Skills Hub which has secured Sarah Welham.

We have also gained significant contacts and associations along the way, more so in the field of retrofit housing than regenerative farming. The most prominent one being Mobie – the Ministry of Building Innovation and Education - which was founded by TV architect George Clarke, and which ran our pilot and retains an interest in working through NPTC group in the future. Find out about them at <https://www.mobie.org.uk/>

Research as to the 'state of play' – the need and opportunity - within Powys

Whilst awaiting the arrival of the Curriculum Development Manager into the project we utilised the time and resources to undertake and commission some baseline survey work into the need and provision of sustainable skills. Their report accompanies this report and is summarised in Appendix B) and gave the following eleven summary points.

- i. There is a need for provision of green or sustainable skills in the economy now and this grows in the future.
- ii. Despite this, generating sufficient demand is likely to require push factors from central or Welsh Government, unless there are clear commercial advantages for particularly SMEs in Powys to access training.
- iii. While Mid Wales had opportunities in this area, these would benefit from being embedded in national initiatives and aligned to existing programmes and bodies such as the Regional Skills Partnerships and Farming Connect to avoid duplication and confusion in an already crowded marketplace.
- iv. Any training courses needs to reflect demand from the market. There is activity that needs supporting now, such as in engineering and heating systems, and these may then provide further opportunities to build from. However, business demand was very specific, making viable courses potentially difficult to run.
- v. Following the shift to online learning following the Covid-19 pandemic, a blended approach to training provision may be suitable for businesses, particularly where it overcomes challenges of geography and the time constraints or opportunity cost for SMEs and the self-employed.
- vi. A central portal where businesses could see what provision was available, how it met their organisation needs and where it was aligned to policy requirements might encourage businesses to participate in training.
- vii. If courses are developed, then mid-level qualifications were most suitable as this filled a market gap, though provision should help to create learning pathways and options for individuals to pursue.
- viii. Any activity to deliver sustainable skills courses should be supported by general awareness of and insight into green and sustainable skills delivered across all courses and qualification levels at HE, FE and potentially even in schools, to ensure that learners understand the impact of this agenda on their career and employers.
- ix. Where possible, training should be remote, either based at the workplace or spread around different locations in Powys to ensure SMEs can attend.
- x. More general advice and training on sustainability at a business level may be suitable at this stage to support businesses as the economy makes its transition and before demand for specific skills provision is sufficient to warrant developing courses in response.
- xi. Demographic issues and out migration in Powys are a barrier that needs to be resolved to enable the demands of the labour market to be met. Offering training and employment opportunities aligned to a green economy may help to attract and retain young people, though there also needs to be such individuals available to access courses.



Pilot projects / curriculum development – direct and indirect work

At the heart of the project was to be the development of an extended – greener - curricula and the piloting of these modules. The intention being to demonstrate that existing readily available curricula in fields such a construction and agriculture could evolve module by module in a more sustainable direction. Evidence of need and opportunity from the Wavehill Report confirmed what was already planned i.e., pilots in the fields of housing retrofit and some form of regenerative agriculture. Progress and achievements are summarised below:

Construction (retrofit)

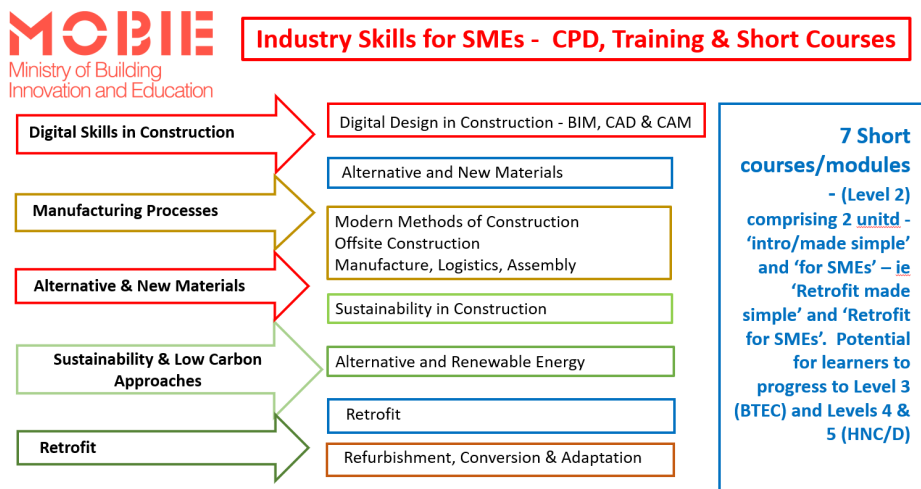
We arrived at this topic just as the market for sustainability courses was becoming increasingly aware of this need. Already in the UK the development of the PAS 2035 (publicly accessible standard) for retrofit had emerged and, whilst tweaked here in Wales, was the basis of a large programme with Housing Associations for delivering what they call ‘optimised retrofit’. This top-down approach was welcomed but left untouched the owner occupier and private rented sectors which account for the majority of existing homes – and thus the majority of existing carbon emissions from homes – in Wales. Across the partnership there were perhaps two significant developments linked to this sphere of sustainable skills. One directly delivered through the project and one instigated by the project.

Retrofit module and pilot.

Mobie were engaged to produce a module / session plan to take students through the whole house approach to building retrofit. This plan accompanies the report, and its online presentation is visualised below but also provided alongside this report.



They also worked with us on producing a skills pathway which provides a clear route map for future development.



We also had the opportunity to carry out a practical demonstration of some of the technologies being taught within this introductory module. A work renowned firm with an emerging specialism in sustainable building design and build – Saint-Gobain

(<https://www.saint-gobain.com/en>)

– approached the project keen to bring forward plans to undertake a practical lesson to demonstrate a partial retrofit and to use it to showcase.

Pen Dinas bungalow (shown right – owned by NPTC Group and leased as a social enterprise hub) was identified as the venue as it allowed for easy access to students; it being adjacent to their Newtown Campus.

Internal wall insulation was the pilot to be undertaken in conjunction with the college’s construction department led by Ian Lumsden.

The work of Mobie is now being taken forward directly with NPTC Group as well as by CAT who are developing a BTEC in Retrofitting Skills for Post 16 building on the work of MOBIE.



Land management

A very different topic but one of significance to a deeply rural county like Powys, with a higher-than-average contribution to the economy coming from farming and land management. The global pressures for cheap food contributing to the industry having a significant contribution to carbon emissions and biodiversity loss bring with it a commensurate need for skills in sustainable land management and food production.

This project again deployed one pilot based around new module development / pilot but also picked up collaborations with two other significant initiatives that it cannot claim the outputs for but which it can claim to have played an active part in shaping and steering.

Regenerative horticulture.

Led by Black Mountain College and run in partnership with NPTC Group of Colleges they have established a 1 academic year, full-time practical course that encompasses organic, permaculture and no-dig principles. Students train in a unique learning environment on the outskirts of Talgarth via practical outdoor learning backed up with classroom theory



covering botany, soil science, food production and ornamental horticulture. The curriculum includes:

- Organic soil management
- Sharpening and maintaining hand tools
- Training & pruning fruit trees
- Propagating plants and seed collection
- Identifying plants by botanical name
- Garden design using natural products
- Planting plans for biodiversity

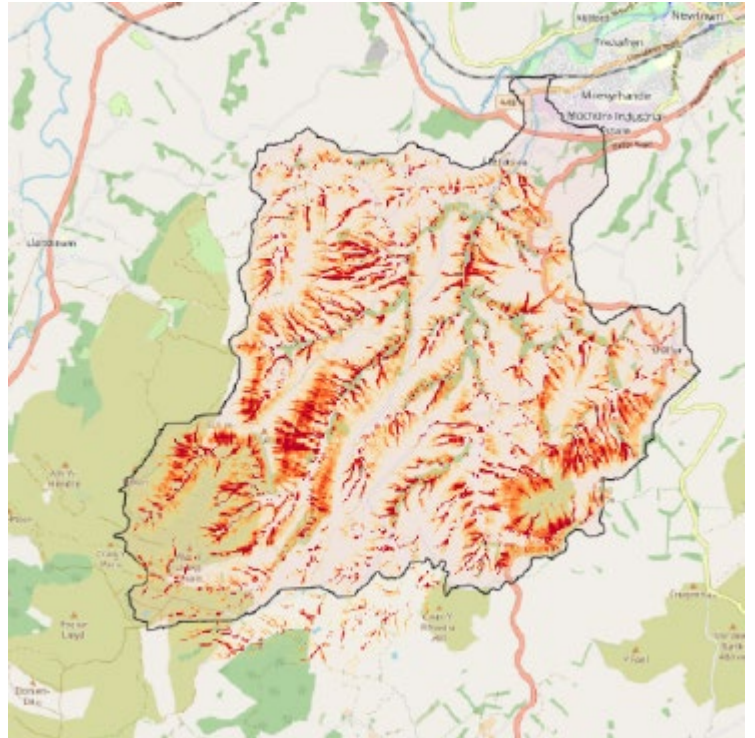
This course is up and running.

Farmland soils, carbon and water harvesting.

Established on two small tributaries of the Severn (Mochdre and Mule) is a growing farmers network (currently comprising 28 farmers) who have come together to learn how they can better manage their land and their businesses. Instigated under this project but now separately funded (levered in funding) it is being led by Severn Rivers Trust and Robert Owen Community Banking Fund as they look at new business models for farmers.

This project has worked alongside them in teasing out where the new sustainable skills might be needed. Two areas of skill development are being explored:

- i. Straight forward **water harvesting from farm buildings** sounds easy but is largely not understood let alone implemented on many farms. This has a modest impact on preventing downstream flooding but can make a substantial difference to an individual farms economics as well as substantially reducing ground water abstraction. NPTC's college farm at Newtown is working with us on how this can form part of their training programme in the future.



- ii. More complex is the **wider soil / sol carbon/ soil water management**. Through the introduction of carbon (organic matter as well as biochar) in to soils not only is carbon sequestered but so substantially more water is retained. This does have the potential to prevent substantial downstream flooding in towns such a Shrewsbury and with this the potential to earn substantial payments from flood defence budgets. There is substantial academic input into this hydrological model approach to from Copenhagen University as well as the more local Walford Agricultural College.



Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA)

Introduced into the project by partner Cwm Harry Land Trust as a follow on to their SkillShop programme CEA – which is hydroponics i.e., the growing of crops in the absence of soils – is one way of substantially increasing productivity whilst lowering the use of land and avoiding any wastage of fertilisers.

A pilot CEA unit was installed by Social Farms and Gardens (levered in funding from Welsh Govt) on the Pen Dinas site in Newtown as a production unit.

This project has supported its operator (Cultivate Cooperative) and is slowly being developed as a training tool by NPTC’s agriculture department. A new module is in preparation but not in time for reporting to this project on. This is a work in progress that has been enabled by this project.

Promotion and awareness

The project has worked largely – but not exclusively – through the partners to deliver new, greener, modules and to pilot their introduction with a view to accelerating their introduction in Mid Wales, and indeed with the ambition that Powys can become a destination for those wishing to learn sustainable skills.

As part of this we undertook just a few key presentations including:

Sustainability Workshop for businesses was put on by Mid Wales Manufacturing Group on 3rd February 2022 with attendees.



Also on 3rd Feb Adam Kennerley was presenting to **Wales Foundational Economy Community of Practice** who were investigating the need for greener skills in the construction industry.

On April 6th Adrian Watson presented to the GRAINN network at Aberinnovation about climate friendly jobs for the future highlighting the groups work in Powys.

These presentations built on a previous presentation prepared by Ceri Stephens who presented to **Mid Wales Regional Skills Council** on 12th January 2022.

Ancillary skills development associated but not delivered by this project

Whilst undertaking the project and engaging

with a wide range of parties we have witnessed a range of initiatives from partners and others, all lending weight to the evidence that sustainable skills are both needed for the Mid Wales economy and can increasingly be provided by local providers.

A number of these have been referenced in this report but are worth relisting as a reminder to the reader of how important this field of work is.

- i. Secondary school opportunities arising from the new Welsh curriculum which places the onus on curriculum development on to each school which opens up the opportunity for sustainability to be better developed and deployed across Wales, if only it could be coordinated.
- ii. CAT's proposals for a site refurbishment which includes a green skills hub increasing the reputation as a centre of excellence in sustainable skills.
- iii. NPTC's Newtown campus making strong progress on introducing opportunities and horticulture, controlled environment agriculture and
- iv. NPTC collaborating with its community on setting up a social enterprise that will train young people in retrofit skills.
- v. Black Mountain College acquiring a campus from which to grow its activities and increase its educational offerings.
- vi. National Nature Service still being discussed as an opportunity for Wales to provide skills and experiences for all young people.
- vii. A more regionally focused Mid Wales Learning and Skills Partnership, with partner Adrian Watson as its inaugural as chair.
- viii. CAT with support of industrial partners, Severn Wye, delivering a retrofit bootcamp with attendees from industry and NPTC
- ix. Development Trust Association Wales expressing interest in how a sustainable skills element can be introduced to its seven-year Sustainable Steps programme it is about to embark upon, working with communities across Wales.

Feedback from the partners

At the close of the project the partners we asked about their views. This summarises those comments returned.

The benefits of delivering this activity, including wider benefits?

- The project built on the knowledge base within the community to advance a joined-up approach to developing skills for the future and addressing one of the main barriers to sustainable economic regeneration in the area: the loss of young people away from the region.
- The Sustainable Skills Cluster Research Report mapped the needs and opportunities for sustainable skills provision in Powys. This provided vital intelligence for the newly formed Mid Wales Regional Learning and Skills Partnership, contributed to developing the curriculum offer in the delivery partners and will inform future developments in the county.
- The additional networking and new partners that followed from the project has developed long lasting and stronger relationships between the educational providers in Powys. This gives additional confidence to all partners that our aims to deliver green skills in the region can be delivered by all the partners, both individually or in partnership. It also helps develop Powys as a regional and potentially national centre for green skills delivery.

What went well?

- The collaborative approach went well, developing a partnership between local training providers which will continue beyond the project. Brought green expertise across Powys together in coordinated manner.
- The Sustainable Skills Cluster Research Report – the report was OK and covered what we needed as an independent report. But with earlier recruitment of staff, we may have been able to get more out of this. For example, we gave Wavehill the contacts for the research, and few were generated by them.
- Developing the curriculum offer

What didn't go well?

- Recruiting and retaining staff – earlier and more stable recruitment of project staff, would have put the project on a stronger footing at the outset. Circumstances dictated that this was unavoidable.
- Covid meant that we couldn't meet face-to-face until late in the project

What could have been done differently?

- Nothing in the circumstances – longer timescales would have helped with earlier recruitment and delivery issues and avoided the 'rush' at the end.

Is there anything else you would like to note?

- The project has built strong relationships between partners in the collaboration which we want to continue to develop going forward. This is continuing and there is active collaboration between partners. The project has clearly demonstrated the need and opportunity for sustainable skills training in Powys and the potential to scale this up.

Key Performance Indicators

Evidence for these is drawn from the range of records, emails and testimonials included in the accompanying files (Appendix C gives the listing), but is summarised here as follows:

Outputs (Case Level Indicators)	Target	Hit	Commentary
No. of networks established	1	1	The Sustainable Skills Network was created due the creation of the project. Representative included; Ceri Stephens, Jayne Jones, Ben Rawlance, Adrain Watson, Eileen Kinsman and Chris Powell.

The Sustainable Skills Network for Powys Document which is included as evidence states the Objectives, Principle Collaboration Points and governance of the project.

No. of jobs safeguarded	2	1.6	Two jobs were safeguarded as a result of the Arwain funded project totalling 1.6 FTE jobs. Contracts of the jobs saved as evidence. SOC Code – 4159 Administrator – 0.6 FTE -Sam Webster SOC Code – 4161 Business Manager – 1 FTE Ceri Stephens Curriculum Coordinator also employed by CAT
No. of pilot activities undertaken/supported	1	1	1 = Retrofit module and pilot installation.
No. of stakeholders engaged	25	24	24 companies engaged in the Wavehill Survey.
No. of participants supported (awareness raising events)	0	0	We didn't set a target for this, nor did we record precisely those taking part in the awareness raising events, but estimates are: 14 attending the Regional Learning and Skills Partnership 24 attendees at the Foundational Economy Community of Practice.
Outcomes – optional.			
No. of jobs created	1	0.31 + 0.35	The project had planned to directly create 2 PAYE roles of which we achieved 1, with the second being undertaken on a self-employed basis both part time positions.
No. of communities benefiting	3	1	Communities of interest benefiting include: 1. Manufacturing & Industry cluster
No. of businesses benefiting	20	5	The Sustainability Skills Hub received five support letters stating the benefit the project had brought to the businesses stated below. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black Mountains College • Centre of alternative technology • WinnCare • Greeve Benefit • NPTC

Model for continuation

At the outset we hypothesised that through collaboration we might find a way of establishing a means of sustaining the partnership longer term. Feedback from the partners is evidence that collaboration will continue but perhaps not in the way it might have originally been envisaged. We had thought that the whole could become greater than the sum of its parts and we would find a way of presenting Powys as a leading sustainable skills destination.

This ambition is still possible and late in the day we were presented with a proposal for what was called Powys Skills Belt that would connect communities to skills organisations (such as CAT, NPTC and BMC) and in turn connect them to learners. There was no time or resource with the tail end of this project to consider this, but DTA Wales has approached the project and is considering piloting it for use within their sustainable steps peer mentoring programme amongst Welsh Communities that will start in early 2023.





COMMUNITIES

create and manage venue profiles, attendance, learning and impact. With increased revenues and cohesion, they can develop and protect their assets.

Powys.SkillsBelt



SKILLS ORGANISATIONS

create and manage courses, and interact with venues. With an increased learner base, skills are more widely distributed, revenues strengthened, and impact increased.



LEARNERS

find, book, and attend courses. With increased skills and community, pathways and livelihoods improve.

There isn't yet a financially viable model to underpin the Powys Skills Belt, but it could work if sufficient traffic and 'deal flow' could go through a platform such as this. DTA Wales is likely to pilot this, providing some follow-on learning for this project.

Recommendations

This area of developing and deploying sustainable skills remains an under-developed sphere, with huge potential for Wales, and specifically for Powys as a leading county given its track record and the partners within it. Therefore, more work needs to continue.

We start with a final report that can be shared with a much wider partnership to include Powys RLSP and Powys CC and indeed with the Welsh Government, all of whom can assist in taking it forward.

The potential remains huge. Having a sustainable skills partnership of some form is essential if Powys is to have any chance of tackling some of its major challenges of:

- i. **Socially** we lose our younger generation from Powys as there are too few opportunities to keep them here. And too few places to learn relevant skills. Once gone too few of them return to live and work here which deprives our community of diversity and heritage and further imbalances our population demographics as we become an aging population, bringing with it the pressures on our services and our costs.
- ii. **Environmentally** we face a dual emergency of climate change and biodiversity loss, with the impacts being felt both globally and locally. The local authority (PCC) having already declared a climate emergency the expectation is high, and a response is needed. Any response will require increased skills and competences.
- iii. **Economically** we need a viable economy, but one based on meeting the environmental challenges and providing our younger generations – and indeed our existing workforce - with far greater opportunities to earn a living within the county.

Our modest project demonstrated that by coming together we could make meaningful progress and inspire others to take action in developing and deploying sustainable skills.

Some of our learning that we would hope others might take forward include:

- A. A shared portal and central marketing plan** for sustainable education in Powys i.e., 'Study in Powys: the home of Sustainability' - a kind of 'what's on guide.'
- B. Ongoing development of courses and curricula**, from short course to NVQs all the way up to MA. With three strong and ambitious providers – CAT, NPTC and BMC – already engaged and with the ability to do far more there is significant potential for Powys to develop itself as a center of excellence for sustainability teaching & learning.



- C. **A platform that enables local businesses and local communities to become part of the training provision**, twinning them with accreditation and with potential students. A sort of peer-to-peer training network.

Our project itself has laid the groundwork and confirmed the potential need and the potential of collaboration. We now need others to step into our shoes and drive this forward. Each partner within this project had – and continues to have – a clear role to play in developing and delivering sustainable skills. However, almost because they have their specialist roles to play – and because each and every one of them is seriously busy – there is one final recommendation:

- D. **An independent coordinating – and driving – force** that can support partners, choreograph developments, and actively promote the training opportunities to potential students both from within Powys and from across the UK. With the ability to support apprenticeships development and potentially reach in to work with school leavers it can help make the whole substantially greater than the sum of its parts and put Powys on the map as a sustainable skills destination.

Summary / end piece

- ✓ Whilst the project suffered from delays and interruptions it did complete its core activities, although as with most projects more time would have helped.
- ✓ As importantly it linked to, animated and at times initiated a wide range of ancillary initiatives in this field, bringing with them substantial added value.
- ✓ Whilst the project did not find a way of viably sustaining a longer-term formal Sustainable Skills Cluster; the research, findings of the project and the participating partners all agree that the need for sustainable skills remains substantial and the opportunity to collaborate – to make the whole greater than the sum of its parts – is still present.
- ✓ And is probably more pressing than ever as the climate emergency mounts and the need to establish a more resilient economy grows.



Collaboration Agreement - Sustainable Skills Cluster (template)

Name of representative	Organisation being represented
Ceri Stephens	Mid Wales Manufacturing Group
Jayne Jones	NPTC
Ben Rawlence	Black Mountains College
Adrian Watson / Eileen Kinsman	Centre for Alternative Technology
Chris Powell	Cwm Harry Land Trust (SkillShop)

This agreement is dated August 2021

1. Background

- 1.1 The parties have agreed to work together on the project detailed in ANNEX A (Project).
- 1.2 The parties wish to record the basis on which they will collaborate with each other on the Project. This Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) sets out:
 - (a) the key objectives of the Project;
 - (b) the principles of collaboration;
 - (c) the governance structures the parties will put in place; and
 - (d) the respective roles and responsibilities the parties will have during the Project.

2. Key objectives for the project

- 2.1 The parties shall undertake the Project to achieve the key objectives set out in ANNEX A to this MoU (Key Objectives).

3. Principles of collaboration

The parties agree to adopt the following principles when carrying out the Project (Principles):

- (a) collaborate and co-operate. Establish and adhere to the governance structure set out in this MoU to ensure that activities are delivered, and actions taken as required.
- (b) be accountable. Take on, manage and account to each other for performance of the respective roles and responsibilities set out in this MoU.
- (c) be open. Communicate openly about activities relevant to the Project, major concerns, issues, or opportunities relating to the Project.
- (d) learn, develop and seek to achieve full potential. Share information, experience, materials and skills to learn from each other and develop effective working practices, work collaboratively to identify solutions, eliminate duplication of effort, mitigate risk and reduce cost.
- (e) adopt a positive outlook. Behave in a positive, proactive manner.
- (f) adhere to statutory requirements and best practice. Comply with applicable laws and standards including public procurement rules, data protection and freedom of information legislation.
- (g) act in a timely manner. Recognise the time-critical nature of the Project and respond accordingly to requests for support.
- (h) manage stakeholders effectively.
 - (i) deploy appropriate resources. Ensure sufficient and appropriately qualified resources are available and authorised to fulfil the responsibilities set out in this MoU; and
 - (j) act in good faith to support achievement of the Key Objectives and compliance with these Principles.

4. Project governance

4.1 Overview

The governance structure defined below provides a structure for the development and delivery of the Project.

4.2 Guiding principles

The following guiding principles are agreed. The Project's governance will:



- (a) provide strategic oversight and direction.
- (b) be based on clearly defined roles and responsibilities at organisation, group and, where necessary, individual level.
- (c) align decision-making authority with the criticality of the decisions required.
- (d) be aligned with Project scope (and may therefore require changes over time);
- (e) leverage existing organisational, group and user interfaces.
- (f) provide coherent, timely and efficient decision-making; and
- (g) correspond with the key features of the Project governance arrangements set out in this MoU

4.3 Steering Group

- (a) The Steering Group provides overall strategic oversight and direction to the Project. This group will consist of at least one and no more than two representatives of each organisation
- (b) The Steering Group shall be managed in accordance with a Terms of Reference to be agreed by the Steering Group at its first meeting. The Terms of Reference will set out, inter alia, the necessary members of the Steering Group, meeting frequency and decision-making remit. The Terms of Reference should also take into account the guiding principles in paragraph 4.2 above.
- (c) Mid Wales Manufacturing Group will set the meetings of the Steering Group following the commencement of the MoU.
- (d) As the Project develops the Steering Group may wish to establish a project board to provide management at operational level.

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1 The parties shall undertake the roles and responsibilities to deliver the Project, as set out in Annex 2.

6. Intellectual property

6.1 Subject to any pre-existing third-party rights, all intellectual property rights, in all written and tangible work created by the individual parties in the course of this agreement shall vest with the originator. All intellectual property rights, in all written and tangible work created by the project staff in the course of this agreement shall vest with the projects via the coordinating organisation (MWMG) and will be held for use in any future Sustainable Skills enterprise determined by this project.

6.2 Nothing in this agreement shall have the effect of transferring ownership to the parties of any materials, intellectual property rights or know how belonging to any party in existence prior to the date of this agreement.

7. Term and termination

7.1 This MoU shall commence on the date of signature by the parties and shall expire on completion of the Project.

7.2 Either party may terminate their role in this MoU by giving at least three months' notice in writing to the other parties [at any time].

8. Variation

This MoU, including the Annexes, may only be varied by written agreement of the Parties.

9. Charges and liabilities

9.1 Except as otherwise provided in the budget, the parties shall each bear their own costs and expenses incurred in complying with their obligations under this MoU.

9.2 The Steering Group shall agree any joint costs and expenses arising in respect of the Project.

9.3 All parties shall remain liable for any losses or liabilities incurred due to their own or their employee's actions and neither party intends that the other party shall be liable for any loss it suffers as a result of this MoU.

10. Status

10.1 This MoU is not intended to be legally binding, and no legal obligations or legal rights shall arise between the parties from this MoU. The parties enter into the MoU intending to honour all their obligations.

10.2 Nothing in this MoU is intended to, or shall be deemed to, establish any partnership or joint venture between the parties, constitute any party as the agent of the other party, nor authorise any of the parties to make or enter into any commitments for or on behalf of the other party.

11. Governing law and jurisdiction

This MoU shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of England and Wales

Appendix B) Wavehill Report



- There is a need for provision of green or sustainable skills in the economy now and this will only grow in the future.
- Despite this, generating sufficient demand is likely to require push factors from central or Welsh Government, unless there are clear commercial advantages for particularly SMEs in Powys to access training.
- While Mid Wales had opportunities in this area, these would benefit from being embedded in national initiatives and aligned to existing programmes and bodies such as the Regional Skills Partnerships and Farming Connect to avoid duplication and confusion in an already crowded marketplace.
- Any training courses developed need to reflect the demand from the market. There is activity that needs supporting now, such as in engineering and heating systems, and these may then provide further opportunities to build from. However, business demand was very specific, making viable courses potentially difficult to run.
- Following the shift to online learning following the Covid-19

pandemic, a blended approach to training provision may be suitable for businesses, particularly where it overcomes challenges of geography and the time constraints or opportunity cost for SMEs and the self-employed.

- A central portal where businesses could see what provision was available, how it met their organisation needs and where it was aligned to policy requirements might help encourage businesses to participate in training.
- If courses are developed, then mid-level qualifications were most suitable as this filled a market gap, though provision should help to create learning pathways and options for individuals to pursue.
- Any activity to deliver sustainable skills courses should be supported by general awareness raising and an insight into green and sustainable skills delivered across all courses and qualification levels at HE, FE and potentially even in schools, to ensure that learners have an understanding of the impact of this agenda on their career and employers.
- Where possible, training should be remote, either based at the workplace or spread around different locations in Powys to ensure SMEs can attend.
- More general advice and training on sustainability at a business level may be suitable at this stage to support businesses as the economy makes its transition and before demand for specific skills provision is sufficient to warrant developing courses in response.
- Demographic issues and out migration in Powys are a barrier that needs to be resolved to enable the demands of the labour market to be met. Offering training and employment opportunities aligned to a green economy may help to attract and retain young people, though there also needs to be such individuals available to access courses.

23 companies and providers were surveyed by Wavehill.