

REGIONAL LEARNING AND SKILLS PARTNERSHIP

BOARD MEETING

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD

Wednesday 23rd July 2025

In The Beacon, Llanelli

Name		Representing
Dean Ward	DW	RLSP Chair
Jonathan Morris	JM	Construction Chair
Angela Maguire-Lewis	AML	NTFW
David Jones	DJ	Energy Chair
Angela West	AW	MEDR
Jane Lewis	JL	RLSP Manager
Andrew Beer	AB	Manufacturing Chair
George Ried	GR	Tourism Chair
Eleri Lewis	EL	Welsh Government
Rob Basini	RB	FSB

Item		Actions
1	To receive and approve the minutes of the meetings held on the 9th June 2025. The minutes of the meeting were reviewed and approved as an accurate and official record of the meeting.	
2	Declarations of Interest Andrew Beer – Centre of Excellence	
3	Presentation from Welsh Government on Flexible Skills SM provided an overview of the Flexible Skills Programme to the Board; the programme has been running for 10 years under the Welsh Government. Its' aim is to support workforce development through training and upskilling initiatives in the private sector businesses across Wales. It is also designed to improve long-term business competitiveness and employee capabilities.	

	The Board were informed of the grant structure; the funding operates on a 50/50 basis and the maximum total project value would be £100,000. The programme is exclusively available to private sector businesses and applicants must have a registered business address in Wales. RB raised a question regarding eligibility criteria for sole traders. It was noted that unlike other programmes, Flexible Skills is not bound by job creation measures, which provides greater flexibility for sole traders and micro businesses. The Chair thanked Sion for his presentation.	
4	RSP Chair Activity update DW raised a question to Medr regarding physical attendance at Board meetings, he indicated that it was preferable that all meetings were held face to face. AW confirmed that starting from September, there will be a representative physically present at the board meetings. DW also emphasised that if a board member is unavailable for a meeting, they should ensure a representative attend in their place. The Board were informed of a recent situation in which a submitted bid was rejected, leading to unprofessional emails being sent to Jane and the team. Board members were reminded that all meeting papers/discussions are strictly confidential and must not be disclosed outside the Board. Moving forward the chair suggested a formal confidentiality agreement will need to be signed by members. DW asked AW to investigate why the retrofit provision was removed from the PLA list. AW agreed to obtain further information and report back to the board at the next meeting. DW requested clarification on who is responsible for decisions related to PLA removals. AW explained that decisions are made by a designated panel of decision-makers. DW asked for a meeting to be arranged with the panel members to address confusion around the removal of retrofit from PLA. This issue has caused concern in the private sector, which is struggling to understand the rationale behind these changes.	Action: If a Board member is unavailable for a meeting, they should ensure a representative attend in their place. AW to arrange a meeting with the panel, Dean, Jane and Jonathan Morris
5	Manager's update on activity JL informed the Board of the latest announcement regarding Round 5 developments in the Celtic Sea which includes two new companies. Among them is Equinor, which has expressed strong interest in collaborating with the RLSP. JL had already met with representatives from Equinor and they are in support of one of	

	the skills and talent initiatives. A meeting with the second company Gwynt Glas would be held in early August. JL also informed the Board that the RLSP is currently undertaking a strategic piece of work on behalf of the UK Government, focused on the Pembrokeshire Regional Skills Pilot. The initiative has been submitted for consideration and is awaiting a formal funding decision. The proposed project if approved would require to be delivered by the end of March 2026.	
6	Presentation on the Celtic Freeport Simon Brighthouse gave an overview on the work on the Celtic Freeport.  Skills Working Groups.pdf During the discussion a query was raised regarding the new position that had been advertised recently for the Freeport Training Partnership Director and how this post would link into the work of the RLSP. DW requested that Simon let the JL know who the newly appointed person was and suggested that JL should meet with them as a matter of urgency. AB inquired about the source of research data being used for floating offshore wind developments in the region. In response, Simon noted that the information is derived from UK Renewables and the UK Offshore Wind Industry Study. He clarified that these are recognised, standard resources widely used across the sector. DJ highlighted RLSP's involvement in supporting two supply chain feasibility studies, one in Neath Port Talbot and another in Pembrokeshire. DJ proposed that greater alignment with social value outcomes should be considered in future planning, especially in relation to supply chain and skills initiatives. He suggested this would enhance RLSP's impact and community engagement. He also indicated that awareness of the First Minister's Task and Finish Group activities was essential, noting it could present strategic alignment opportunities or inform future RLSP priorities. JL raised concerns about the limited local infrastructure available to deliver specialised training related to renewable energy. As an example, participants currently need to travel to Sunderland for certain provision. JL queried whether capital investment could be explored through Simon's project to develop training facilities regionally and reduce the reliance on external centres.	

	Job Creation Beyond FLOW DJ requested that RLSP proactively monitor and share data on job creation related to wider opportunities in renewable energy beyond floating offshore wind (FLOW). This will ensure RLSP remains responsive to broader labour market dynamics and can adapt its skills planning accordingly.	
7	Skills and Talent Programme: To consider the recommendations from the Skills Solution group on the following applications: a) Semicon West JL informed the Board that the application had been presented to the Board previously and was refused due to a number of concerns regarding cost and the anticipated number of individuals that would be targeted in schools. The applicants have resubmitted the application taking into account the comments of the Board including reducing the overall cost and increasing the number of higher skilled individuals. JL emphasised to the Board the growth of the semiconductor sector and this is exciting for the region with the close link between Gower College Swansea and Swansea University who have been awarded funding to offer a Doctorate in semiconductor. The Board AGREED: that the application be approved. b) Futurescape phase 2 JL provided an overview of the application, highlighting its alignment with the growing regional demand for enhanced employability skills. The initiative will collaborate with Agored Cymru and Coleg Sir Gâr to co-design a bespoke, accredited unit tailored to the evolving needs of young learners and employers across South West Wales. JL indicated that the project would now work with years 10/11 not the younger pupils as set out in the initial application. EL emphasised the increasing emphasis employers place on soft skills and acknowledged that this project directly supports the development of those. The Board AGREED: that the application be approved. c) Centre of Excellence JL informed the group this project is unique compared to previous proposals and was developed following discussions with local businesses. The project responds to a regional need for a well-organised, skilled workforce that can competitively bid	

for major contracts, especially in the offshore wind sector. The challenge is that the region lacks large-scale businesses with the necessary capacity to meet the demands of such contracts. The proposal has received letters of support from all involved businesses and is backed by the Crown Estate. Ultimately, the project aims to create jobs, strengthen the local economy, and build a future-ready workforce.

DJ emphasised the importance of establishing a nationally recognised Centre of Excellence.

EL raised a query regarding the legal and structural framework of the project, specifically whether a formal legal entity would be established to underpin its operations. JL confirmed that this would indeed be the case, ensuring a robust governance model that supports accountability, continuity, and transparent decision-making.

RB highlighted the potential wider benefits to the regional economy, noting that the development of the Centre could generate a positive effect throughout the local supply chain.

The Board AGREED: that the application be approved with conditions of involvement of the RLSP with the Board to be set up to oversee the development.

Update on the Skills and Talent programme.

JL updated the Board on the progress of the Skills and Talent programme and highlighted key areas to note in the report.



Skills and Talent
Update report July 20

Update on Skills for the workforce programme

JL informed the Board that the project will build on the successful results of the previous activities such as the Skills for Industry project (£19m) and Welsh Government’s PLA programme, providing a strategic approach to the delivery of workforce development supporting productivity and progression in employment, increasing the number of people entering or currently within the workforce in Wales with technical and job specific skills at an intermediate and higher level.

JL informed the Board that the project is scheduled to launch in September, with individual launch events to be held at each college.

DW raised concern regarding the significant budget allocation with very little progress to date. The Board discussed the need for clarity on next steps and agreed that a meeting should be convened with the project team to address outstanding issues.

SJ to be invited to next Board meeting to give an update.

	Simon Jenkins will be invited to attend the next Board meeting to contribute to the discussion.	
8	Update from Cluster Chair activity and any skills issues to be addressed GR provided an overview of the current study he was leading on and ongoing efforts to enhance work experience opportunities in the tourism sector. Also, engagement with the 2027 Aviation Showcase, which will serve as a key platform for promoting the regional skills agenda. DJ presented recent developments in the energy sector, focusing on feasibility studies. DJ highlighted the Crown Estate’s substantial financial commitment to support investment and expansion in the supply chain. Additionally, the Office for Investment has expressed strong interest in driving a skills-led strategy tailored to regional needs. JM reported that the main body of work for the construction cluster has been working on the action plan for retrofit also established a working group tasked with identifying best practices and guiding collaborative strategies. Along with the Level 2 construction qualifications and voiced strong support for ongoing work in the sector. AB noted the importance of involving businesses both large and small in the new collaborative project happening. He stated that Tata’s training facilities was opening to small enterprises, aimed at increasing access to vocational training.	
9	Medr update AW went through the Medr update with Board members and indicated that she would investigate the PLA list that was raised at the start of the meeting.  Medr Update 23.7.25.docx Date of Next Meeting 24th September in The Beacon.	