

# A Brilliant Effort, and Now it's Time to Think Ahead

*Anthony Hunt elected chair of CCR City Deal Regional Cabinet*

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*CCR lays out 10 priorities for post-Covid activity*

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*How Covid 19 could herald a new dawn for Welsh Manufacturing*

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*CCR Regional Cabinet Backs Further Investment in Range of City Deal Projects*

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*UK Research and Innovation Funding award to CS Connected*

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**Anthony Hunt**

“ I am passionate about our ambition to become a truly Connected, Competitive and Resilient region. We will only achieve that by working closely with partners across the public and private sectors, especially the fantastic business community in our region. ”



**Jane Mudd**

“ Cardiff Capital Region was built around a core belief in the value of collaboration, and in this crisis we have proved that our strength as a region lies in our desire and ability to work together to achieve common goals. ”



**Peter Fox**

“ We must try and strike a balance in the region; avoiding knee-jerk reactions, focusing on our 20-year outlook and working in real-time, adapting to the shifting position. ”



**Kellie Beirne**

“ By taking a new approach and not simply carrying on with the old ways of doing things, we believe we can help our businesses and communities move beyond the impact of the pandemic and emerge stronger and better able to face the future with confidence. ”



**Frank Holmes**

“ We need to move away from funding one-off projects to promoting clusters and eco-systems, using tools such as the Strength in Places fund. ”



**Cara Aitchison**

“ I am optimistic about our Cardiff Met’s ability to contribute to recovery in industry and business, and in wider civic society. We’ve got a lot to offer around entrepreneurship, and also around social cohesion and wellbeing. ”



**Chris Sutton**

“ The pandemic has given us a change to rethink our mindset, challenge assumptions and reimagine how our economy should operate. If we grasp this opportunity there is every chance Cardiff Capital Region will emerge stronger. ”

# FOREWORD

BY SUZANNE CHESTERTON



## Welcome to the second edition of our CCR publication

When the first issue of this publication came out in April, Cardiff Capital Region and its businesses and communities were adapting to the unprecedented economic shock of the Covid-19 lockdown. Our role in the Capital Region’s governing bodies was to help businesses access the support being made available by different levels of government; and secondly to decide how our own plans should change in the new circumstances that were likely to prevail after the lockdown had eased and the pandemic was over.

The publication follows the format of the previous issue. It includes columns, articles, interviews and thought leadership pieces that have previously featured on our own website, and on our dedicated section on the Business News Wales website.

It’s purpose is to give our readers a second chance to read the insights of leading figures in the Capital Region, consolidated into a single, attractive publication.

There is a wide variety of content in the publication much of it unsurprisingly reflecting the impact of, and amazing responses to, Covid-19. Alongside thought leadership pieces on questions such as does Covid-19 herald a new dawn for Welsh manufacturing, Leigh Hughes discusses the importance of transferrable skills whilst Frank Holmes stresses the need for collaboration and focus on building clusters and eco systems to ensure inclusive, sustainable growth.

There are a selection of articles showcasing the amazing responses to Covid-19 made by some of our Fintech and medtech companies and we have also taken the opportunity to follow the progress of 5 of our CCR graduates and their employers on their respective lockdown work experiences.

In addition you can read about the CCR post Covid-19 strategic priorities alongside updates on investment decisions, of which there were many throughout this period.

Finally, a new feature introduced towards the end of June has been a series of podcasts recorded by leading members of the Regional Cabinet and others, in conversation with Business News Wales MD Mark Powney to explain how they thought the CCR had coped with the pandemic, and what impact Covid-19 would have on the region and its businesses moving forward. These recordings show the strength of thinking that is taking place amongst the region’s top leaders as they map out the future for the Cardiff Capital Region. Interviews with Kellie Beirne and Rhys Thomas feature in this edition with Huw David, Anthony Hunt, Leigh Hughes and Frank Holmes to follow in the next publication.

Hopefully there is something for everyone in this edition and we hope you enjoy the read.

*Suzanne Chesterton*

**Marketing & Communications Lead**

# Graduates Making Their Mark in CCR Businesses: Quantum Advisory

When the coronavirus lockdown was announced in March independent financial services consultancy Quantum Advisory was ready, as financial controller Suzy Lloyd explained.

*"We were expecting it and our business continuity activity was actively engaged in planning for it; but despite that the speed of implementation was a challenge. Getting over 100 people set up at home within a day or two isn't plain sailing, especially as some, without business laptops, even had to come and collect their desktop computers and chairs," she said.*

Quantum Advisory's IT team also had the challenge of getting remote access sorted for everyone, getting the whole team briefed on using networking tools such as Teams, downloading conference calling apps like Zoom, and sorting out diverting all landlines to mobiles.

There was also the very real need to keep spirits up, maintain motivation and deal with the potential issues around mental health, which can be exacerbated by periods of isolation and lack of companionship.

*We are doing our very best to keep everyone engaged and inject a bit of fun into the way we work. We have weekly team calls using Zoom, we have a WhatsApp group to keep the little day to day conversations flowing. Our investment team are even having team lunches where everyone dials in and has a chat over lunch.*

*We are also placing more emphasis on phone calls, making sure we talk to each other every day and stop the temptation to overuse email just because it's easier," Suzy added.*

One person for whom the lockdown was an unexpected change was Toni Edwards, recently employed at Quantum Advisory through the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) Graduate Scheme. A finance and accountancy graduate from Cardiff University, she started at Quantum Advisory on February 4th. Six weeks later the country went into lockdown and she was working from home.

*"It's been a change for everyone. We have flexible working hours, so now I'm working from home I usually start around 8am as I'm up, and then I can finish earlier than I would normally.*

*"They asked everybody if they had the means to work from home. I had a laptop so it was fine; if you didn't then the company would provide one for you. We have a works app; you login remotely and then it's basically the same as working in the office, so not really a huge change."*

**As a new recruit, Toni admits that she misses the direct human contact of working in an office.**

*"It means a lot more email contact, rather than being able to just talk to people where the answers are instant. I prefer working from the office as I am still learning, and at my stage I think that face-to-face contact, especially in terms of feedback, is better," she said.*

*There is a lot of trust involved and it's good that they do seem to trust me. We have a works WhatsApp so we can all stay in contact which is a big help. We also play a game on there to lift people's spirits, "Through the Q Hole", where everybody shows a picture or short video of their house and we have to guess which member of the team lives there. Little things like that make a big difference with everything that's going on. We also use Microsoft Teams and are trying out Zoom for meetings so we are all still very much in contact," she added.*

**Toni is hoping that the pandemic doesn't affect the next steps on her career path.**

*"Quantum is paying for my ACA qualification to be a Chartered Accountant, which will hopefully still start after my probationary period. It's really good that they offer that and I'm excited about making a start on the next chapter of my career," she said.*

Suzy said:

*"Toni has adapted really well to the changing environment and her appointment has given us much needed extra capacity in a period where tasks are taking longer, whilst we all adjust to the new modus operandi. Using technology to communicate comes second nature to Toni's generation, so she has had no issues at all with all the new tools we are having to use."*

If you are evaluating your capacity and need any further resource to manage at this time, the Cardiff Capital Region Graduate Scheme may be able to help. The Scheme can provide a free and streamlined recruitment service that can match your immediate resourcing needs to high-skilled graduate talent in the region.

If you are interested in finding out more please get in touch with either [laura.carter@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:laura.carter@cardiff.gov.uk) or [Geraldine.OSullivan@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:Geraldine.OSullivan@cardiff.gov.uk).



**JON WOOD**

**A MEDTECH SECTOR**

**FIT FOR THE PRESENT**

**AND THE FUTURE**



# A Medtech Sector Fit for the Present and the Future



I have been hugely impressed with our region's medtech businesses during this present crisis. This has been the greatest national emergency that most of us can remember, and our businesses, like many people in the Region – have responded by doing whatever they can to help.

**Jon Wood**  
CCR Strategic Lead

The Life Sciences Hub Wales and MediWales have both issued appeals for companies to help with supplying the things desperately needed by the NHS and other emergency, health and social care providers. Things such as ventilators, hand sanitisers and personal protective equipment (PPE) can be made by companies that normally work in other sectors, such as distilleries for sanitisers. But some urgently needed things, such as data driven systems to allow rapid analysis and diagnosis from test results, require more specialist companies.

“ As Strategy Lead for Clusters to the City Deal, one of my main priorities is medical devices and diagnostics.

The Cardiff Capital region has more than 200 businesses working in the field. Along with its three universities and access to both the world's first compound semiconductor cluster and NHS Wales, it makes for a strong and vibrant cluster operating in a supportive ecosystem.

We were already convinced before the pandemic that this sector would be of vital importance to the future economic success of the region. So we were already committed to doing what we could to help businesses in it prosper and grow.

## What does innovation in medical technologies look like?

Imagine virtual reality ultrasound headsets that allow sonographers to view the ultrasound images directly on the patient before them. Endoscope devices that not only allow surgeons to see internal organs, but also allow them to cut tissue and seal blood vessels, at the same time and with the same device. 3D-printed titanium bone replacements, identical to the bones they replace, preventing the need for multiple rounds of surgery to remove screws and plates.

All these innovations already exist in South Wales, made by companies such as Intelligent Ultrasound, Creo Medical and the Centre for Batch Manufacturing.

“ So imagine what could happen if we connected the cutting-edge businesses that are already here with the future of electronics, and provided the resulting innovations an easy route into the NHS.

The pieces already exist for the Cardiff Capital Region to be recognised as a world leader in medical devices and diagnostics, and home to next generation medtech firms. With the right support, it could become the place to set up a new company, and for high school leavers with an interest in medtech to come to train, study or work in one of our thriving local businesses.

My role is to work with businesses, universities, Welsh Government, and support agencies such as Life Sciences Hub and MediWales, to develop a roadmap and strategy for how we realise that vision.

## There are some key questions we have to answer:

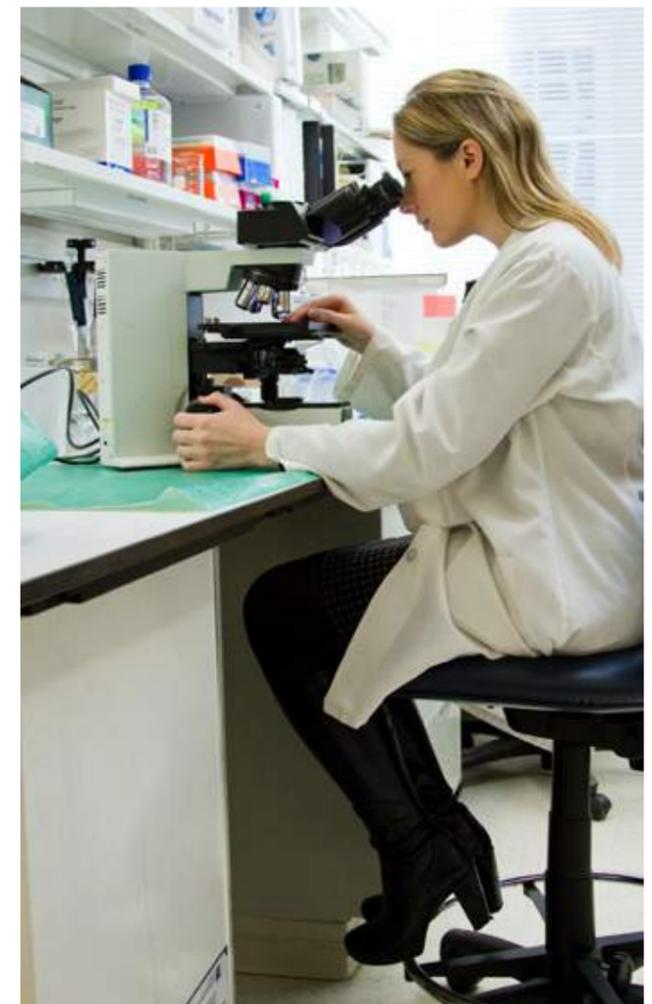
What barriers do businesses in the region face?

How can we align the cutting-edge research to local business need, and in doing so grow the economy?

How can we ensure that the universities and colleges are helping to train students with all the skills businesses require?

How can we ensure medical devices and diagnostics companies can work with and best access the outputs of the compound semiconductor cluster?

Our priority right now in Cardiff Capital Region is to do what we can to help all our businesses get through these difficult days. But we also have an eye to the future, and remain convinced that the medical diagnostics and devices sector will be a hugely important one in our region's economic life – just as it is in our present fight against Covid-19.





# Medtech Sector Proves its Worth in Coronavirus Pandemic

Wales has hundreds of businesses working in the life sciences and medical technology sectors. In the Cardiff Capital Region alone there are 200 businesses working in medical diagnostics and devices. Some of these businesses have played a key part in helping the NHS and other healthcare providers tackle the UK Covid-19 epidemic.

From the early days of the pandemic, South Wales companies were there offering their products, helping develop new ones or adapting to produce other things that were urgently needed. In February Cardiff-based medtech Bond Healthcare joined an international consortium led by the Canadian firm Sona Nanotech that was developing a rapid, cheap and easy to use screening test to help triage individuals suspected of having the virus.



Bond was the only company in the world developing the sort of bespoke digital products needed to allow the data from the tests to be collected through a reader system or app before being stored in the cloud. Phil Groom, commercial director of Bond Healthcare, said:

**“The Covid-19 outbreak demonstrates the urgent global need for digitally connected, data-driven, rapid diagnostic test systems.”**

As the pandemic developed, life sciences network MediWales issued a call for companies that could help with the supply of essential products to register with them. Among the products they asked companies to get in touch about were ventilators, testing kits, dashboard systems to allow access to real-time information, systems to manage and predict workflow, blood gas analysers, screening and patient monitoring equipment, and PPE.

The strength of Cardiff Capital Region’s medtech sector depends not only on its businesses, but also on the quality of its researchers and scientists in its universities and hospitals. A team of Cardiff University and Public Health Wales scientists has been playing a leading role in sequencing Covid-19 virus genomes as part of the Covid-19 Genomics UK Consortium (COG-UK).

By March 25 the scientists had already sequenced more than 50 Covid-19 genomes from Wales.

Dr Catherine Moore, consultant clinical scientist at the Wales Specialist Virology Centre, said the data was giving scientists “incredible” insights into the transmission and dynamics of a new virus into a population with no immunity.

Covid-19 has accentuated the importance of the medtech sector, but it had already been identified as a priority for investment by the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal. The 200 companies working in medical diagnostics and devices, most of them SMEs, employ 8,000 people between them and have a combined turnover of £1.5bn.

The sector is one of the fastest growing in the Capital Region, and its potential for further growth is considered to be large. It rests in part on the strong research base provided by the region’s universities, with three in the

region active in the medical diagnostics field. Cardiff University placed 8th in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework for clinical medicine, through the School for Precision Medicine and Diagnostic Pathology Hub.



The region can boast some world leading anchor companies. Renishaw, based in Pontyclun, has a centre of excellence in healthcare industrial additive manufacturing, also known as 3D printing. Creo Medical, based in Chepstow, is a world leader in endoscopic electrosurgery devices. Cardiff-based TrakCel has established itself as the best in class cellular orchestration platform for advanced therapies, supporting clinical and commercial therapies globally and multi-lingually across a range of therapies.

At a meeting in early March, before the coronavirus outbreak had really taken hold in the UK, the Regional Cabinet agreed to provide £30,000 for due diligence into a project to develop a life sciences innovation hub just south of Junction 32 of the M4 in north Cardiff. It’s hoped the development will attract research bodies and industry, with space for up to 2,000 workers.

The hub is just one element in a five-pronged strategy by Cardiff Capital Region to develop its medtech sector. Other prongs include developing a fit for the future ecosystem bringing together innovative businesses, research institutions and government; enhancing the region’s pre-clinical and clinical trial capacity; boosting local skills with apprenticeships and new university and college courses; and cutting the cost of bringing new ideas to market by creating a shared resource directory.

**Right now the priority in Cardiff Capital Region is to help businesses get through the current emergency, and to help our medtech businesses in the fight to beat the virus. But in the longer term, after the crisis is over, the City Deal will be doing all it can to help boost a sector that has so much proved its worth.**



PODCAST | VIDEO

**Wales Business Review**  
– Episode 8

Welcome to the eighth episode of  
Wales Business Review.

This week former First Minister of  
Wales Carwyn Jones is joined by  
Frank Holmes, Cardiff Capital Region  
Chair and Founding Partner, Gambit  
Corporate Finance LLP and Robert  
Lloyd Griffiths, Director of IoD.

**LISTEN/WATCH NOW**



**FRANK HOLMES**  
**BEYOND RESILIENCE:**  
**MAKING THE BEST OUT**  
**OF POST COVID-19**  
**RECOVERY**



# Beyond Resilience: Making the Best out of Post Covid-19 Recovery



The Japanese proverb ‘fall seven times, rise eight’ is resonant with the concept of resilience, a popular outlook widely adopted recently by economists, government and business leaders, and a pillar of the Cardiff Capital Region’s Industrial Economic Plan.

**Frank Holmes**

Chair CCR Economic Growth Partnership, Partner Gambit Corporate Finance

The Japanese proverb ‘fall seven times, rise eight’ is resonant with the concept of resilience, a popular outlook widely adopted recently by economists, government and business leaders, and a pillar of the Cardiff Capital Region’s Industrial Economic Plan.

Resilience is not just the ability to persevere. It is also a perspective built on remaining focused on the important things in life rather than what seems most urgent, which is often coloured by lack of information and negative emotions.

The global Covid-19 crisis drives us to instinctively assess the risks and danger to ourselves of contamination, of the loss of lives and livelihood, as well as exposure to irreversible damage to our social fabric. Urgency compels us to take immediate action, when what is required is systematic analysis, thorough discussion, incremental actions and careful evaluation, not just of the worst case but of the probable and best-case scenarios too.

“ In anticipation of the return to normal conditions, we must explore techniques that go beyond resilience to cultivate re-imagination and anti-fragility...

...whilst accepting that the only things we can control are in the present.

Anti-fragility goes beyond resilience and robustness. The concept of resilience implies resisting shocks and disorder but attempting to carry on as we were before; whilst the philosophy behind the anti-fragility model is to gain from exceptional circumstances and get better, because each setback is an opportunity for advancement.

This is particularly visible today in the influence of ever-expanding digital technology, cloud computing and artificial intelligence. The next few months

will prove whether some of these accessible new technologies, notably teleconferencing, can allow efficient mass remote working for employees across many sectors; increasing productivity, and speeding up the reinvention of the office and reconfiguration of supply chains.

Business travel, large corporate and social events, bank branches, hospitality venues, shops, and even universities, are being undermined by digitalisation, online shopping, and e-learning, with cash being ostracised in favour of contactless payments. The adoption of lean manufacture and just in time delivery of components will lose its efficiency due to disruption through low levels of stock holdings.

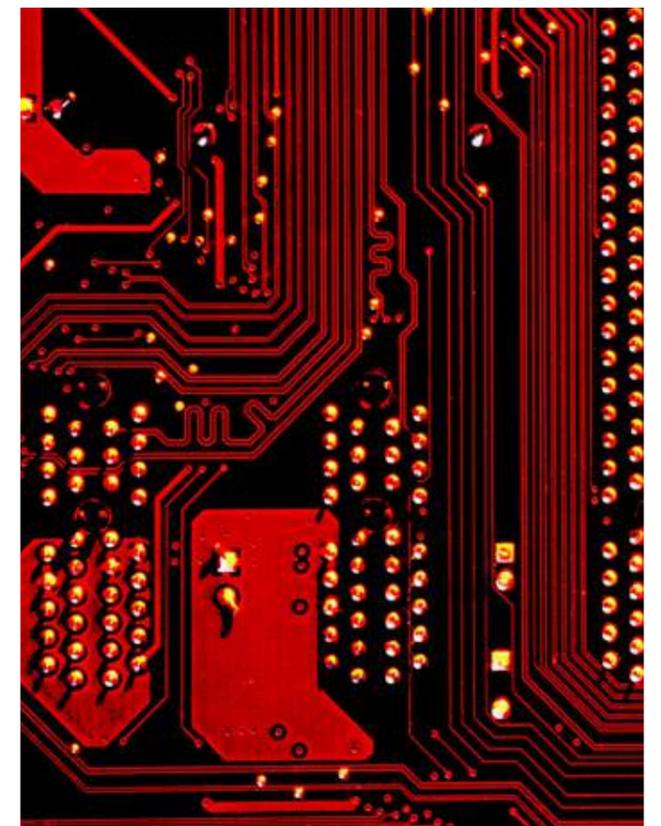
Traditionally, businesses have been able to invoke risk planning and move production from afflicted areas or suppliers, whereas Covid-19 will affect these options simultaneously. Reverting to bigger inventories or localised ecosystem supply chains may become the new norm, thereby validating the cluster model currently being promoted by CCR in sectors of strength.

However, these shifts in the patterns of demand are further complicated by the fact that resources do not flow smoothly from contracting industries to expanding ones. Shop assistants or airport staff will not quickly become gig or construction workers on the growth of the digital economy or the Government’s new infrastructure projects.

Whilst we cannot predict with any precise certainty which businesses, government departments or institutions, faced with these technological disruptions, skills shortages or supply chain shifts, will disappear, there will be some significant casualties.

“ This global crisis offers an opportunity to reflect on the suitability of the old mantra of “business as usual”, and re-imagine new ways of doing things.

If ever there was a time for cohesion on policy at all levels of government, forming new relationships between private and public sectors, invoking speed of delivery, ripping up normal outdated rules, avoiding reasons to say “no” and finding new ways to make things work, it is right here and right now.



# Looking Beyond COVID-19 for the Wales FinTech Sector



**Gavin Powell**  
General Secretary,  
FinTech Wales

**We are currently going through a traumatic and disruptive event that demands all our attention. But what happens after Covid-19? Stepping back for a moment, is there an opportunity beyond the present for the Welsh fintech sector?**

We are undoubtedly going to see a lasting impact from the pandemic. The changes we are seeing will facilitate a greater use of remote working, removing reliance on the traditional office.

The opportunity from new technology existed before Covid-19, but what has changed is the landscape. Covid-19 will act as a real leveller for a short time. The nations and regions that offer an environment allowing a rapid response will recover quickest and best, gaining a real competitive advantage.

**Luckily Wales is well positioned, and with some key interventions can quickly become a leading emerging location for fintech businesses.**

Wales was already preparing itself as a more efficient and resilient environment, through work by Fintech Wales and proactive industry, academia and government stakeholders. Already touted as a key sector by Cardiff Capital Region and the Welsh Government, the alignment of their vision with Fintech Wales meant that we were already on course before Covid-19, and we continue to travel on that trajectory.

This work will align the industrial sector with academia, government bodies and wider UK strategies. Forming a long-term, unified vision and roadmap for the Welsh sector will be at its core.

**We will be engaging with companies in Wales to understand their technology needs.**

We will also explore how their target markets may change due to external disruptions, which will in turn require new and different technologies and approaches.

Once in place, the roadmap will allow us to focus efforts on two areas. Firstly, addressing those common technology challenges through a more efficient innovation pipeline; engaging government bodies and funding mechanisms, academia, SMEs and large organisations in a collaborative manner; and shortening time to market of innovative solutions. Secondly, moving to a timely and more proactive means of developing and delivering skills into the sector.

These changes will reduce risk and maximise opportunities for growth and success for both existing and new companies in the sector.

Innovation helps achieve medium and long-term prosperity following a major disruption like Covid-19. It is often the differentiator, and taking your foot off that innovation gas pedal will only provide an opportunity for a competitor to progress.

Of course, that luxury is not available to all, as survival is the priority for many at the moment. But providing the environment for fintech companies to innovate after Covid-19 will be the single most important thing we can do to secure a better future for the sector.

So while the country, people and economy are in a dark tunnel looking for signs of light, we are working hard with others to make sure that the world we emerge into is a place ready for the next chapter of fintech in Wales.



**LEIGH HUGHES**  
**MAPPING A PATH**  
**TO A BETTER**  
**SKILLED FUTURE**



# Mapping a Path to a Better Skilled Future



One question I always get asked by inward investors into our region is: what's the talent pipeline like?

**Leigh Hughes**

Chair CCR Regional Skills Partnership, CSR Director Bougveys UK

It's a fair question, because the local skills base is one of the key considerations for any business deciding where to locate its operations.

That's why skills have been identified as a priority for investment in Cardiff Capital Region.

“ Whatever happens to our economy in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, the skills of our people will be of huge importance to how our region's businesses perform in the future.

Before the pandemic hit, we had been developing a three-year plan focusing on the priority sectors of the future in south-east Wales, the ones – such as compound semiconductors and medical diagnostics and devices – with the biggest potential for economic growth and creation of high value jobs.

The plan has been informed by engagement with key sector groups of employers, training providers and government; and we believe that it and our recommendations to government will ensure that

the needs of industry will be met, and this will provide opportunities for young people to learn and earn in the region.

Our research with employers, whatever the sector, provides us with very similar feedback, and that is that young recruits struggle with things like being part of a team, communicating, reading and writing.

Digital skills span all sectors, because we're moving into a world where artificial intelligence and automation are looming large. Digital technology skills are enabling and transforming industries across Wales and the region and changing the way people live and work, as you can see with the numbers of people now working from home. The sector is evolving at such a pace, it's not just young people and future roles.

“ The disruptive nature of new technologies will affect existing occupations in many industries, so upskilling the current workforce will be a necessity.

Crucially, though, our work on skills is not just about equipping people with high value skills for high value jobs. In a region like ours, if you only focus on the high growth sectors, you risk leaving people behind. In Cardiff Capital Region, which already has big inequalities, we don't want to do that.

During the Covid-19 outbreak we have seen clearly the value of social care. Frontline workers who have traditionally been seen as low skilled have risked their lives daily to bring care and comfort to some of the most needy and vulnerable people in our communities.

After this pandemic, social care workers will rightly enjoy a higher regard among the public.

They will also begin to be seen as skilled workers. We believe that the nature of social care is likely to change at a much quicker pace than originally anticipated as it becomes more embedded with health care and we adjust as a society.

Already, before the outbreak started, there was a requirement for everybody in the sector to achieve a level 2 qualification, and this was presenting challenges and means there is a significant skills gap. Once that's achieved, people will want to progress to level 3 or 4. We're starting to bring some status and a proper career progression pathway into social care.

So in the Cardiff Capital Region of the future we'll have degrees and higher apprenticeships in the high value sectors such as cyber security and fintech, but we'll also have equipped people in the foundational economy now with the skills that are more resilient in a fast-changing environment.

This will give us the resilience and competitiveness we will need to survive and prosper – as individuals, businesses, and communities – in the post Covid-19 future.



# Skills in the Cardiff Capital Region

**Covid-19 has put our previous assumptions about the economy into doubt.**

There are clear indicators that we are heading into recession, and worrying forecasts that it will be more severe than the 2008 recession, or indeed any downturn since at least the 1930s, and perhaps before. Economists disagree only about the shape of the curve; in other words, how long it will take before we are on the road to recovery.

In this situation, it's essential that public bodies, like businesses, reconsider some of their previous plans. It's too early to say how those plans should change, but change they will undoubtedly have to.

Nevertheless, there are a few things about which we can be sure. However long the recession or delayed the recovery, working people in Cardiff Capital Region will need the best skills they can have if they are to get and hold jobs, and help our businesses, old and new, survive through the hard times and take advantage of the recovery when it comes.

That's why Cardiff Capital Region's focus on skills as a priority for investment continues to make sense as we look into an uncertain economic future. Before the pandemic struck, the Capital Region was looking at a multi-pronged strategy for skills under the title Future Ready. The overall aim was to "To leverage the potential and impact of all CCR City Deal investments and programmes in creating an inclusive and entrepreneurial future-orientated system for jobs and skills."



**One of the key parts of the strategy is to scale up the CCR Graduate Scheme which has just completed its pilot phase.**

This scheme aims to stop the brain drain of graduates from the region, which typically sees 35% of graduates leave the region to find work elsewhere every year.

The scheme is a collaboration between the region's universities – the University of South Wales, Cardiff University, Cardiff Metropolitan University and the Open University – along with business groups and trade bodies, and seeks to line up graduates with opportunities in businesses that previously had little or no engagement with the graduate recruitment market. The one year pilot, which ran from April 2019 to April 2020, involved 50 graduates, the vast majority of whom have secured permanent roles.

Following the success of the pilot, In March the CCR Regional Cabinet approved plans to scale up the graduate programme. Whereas Covid-19 will undoubtedly have an impact on the pace of this scale up, what is not in question is that when the time is right this will be a key plank of the CCR's Skills Strategy.

The Graduate Scheme is just one element in the Future Ready Skills Framework. Another is a shared apprenticeship scheme for priority sectors, with

single entry routes to promote better co-ordination and emphasises on social value and engagement of SMEs and smaller companies.

Another innovative idea is to integrate graduate and shared apprenticeship schemes in a single learner pathway, directing individuals who don't have the skills to take up an opportunity with a particular employer towards the right training providers.

One of the most exciting elements of the framework is a proposal to create a more intelligent labour market, using data assets and real-time information both to better match employers and jobseekers in the present, and to accurately predict future skills needs.

Finally, the framework also aims to build innovation capacity and enable people, businesses and organisations to become more entrepreneurial; and to embed diversity and inclusion in all its activities, supporting local wealth building and the foundational economy.

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**The various elements of the framework have one thing in common:**

That they are designed to make Cardiff Capital Region more competitive and resilient by encouraging entrepreneurship and embracing inclusivity. Cardiff Capital Region will prosper if all its people have the skills they need to find work in the businesses of the 21st century. This will be as true post Covid-19 as it was before.

In the months ahead we will have a better idea how our economy will cope with the impact of the pandemic, and what resources are available to pursue the region's skills agenda. There is a great deal of work that is already being done to ensure the skills base in the region is sufficient to meet the demands and challenges of the future, and more announcements can be expected in due course. Whatever happens, skills will continue to be at the heart of the Capital Region's strategy for growth.





## How FinTechs Have Adapted to Covid-19:

**BACKBASE**

Cardiff Capital Region's fintechs, like most businesses, have had to make some big changes in the way they work during this coronavirus pandemic.

Being technology based businesses, however, they were probably better placed than many to make the adjustment to a remote model of working.

That's certainly been the experience of James Christian, development director of Backbase, a global provider of digital banking platforms for the finance industry. The company is headquartered in the Netherlands where it was founded in 2003, but has run an R&D centre in Cardiff since 2017, employing 65 people there.

**James explained how Backbase was able to adapt rapidly to a new way of working.**

“

*Compared to other industries we are relatively well set up, we're often working with colleagues and customers around the world, and our key systems are cloud based. Our ICT team did a really good job provisioning the VPN capacity” he said.*

*Nevertheless, the company had never had all its staff working from home before, and like many companies had to learn how to operate best under the new conditions. It was helped by the creativity of its teams and their agile approach to working.*

*“Each team has its own processes, they're very agile. Teams have been having regular weekly reviews of how things are going, keeping an eye on their key performance indicators. We've seen a quick shift to digital whiteboarding for all manner of activities; facilitating feedback sessions, planning and the like.”*

**Which is not to say there haven't been lessons to learn along the way. The reliance on video conferences could itself become a distraction and a hindrance to efficient work.**

“

*We saw a lot of meetings being booked in, people were saying they feel like they're on meetings and video chats all day. So we went away and did some research on how you move away from this reliance on meetings.*

*Sometimes managers, if they can't tap someone on the shoulder for an answer, will call a meeting, which gets quite distracting.”*

**Management has also had to show an awareness that employees are having to juggle work and other commitments in difficult conditions.**

*Before, working from home was more of an occasional thing for most of us. Balancing work and childcare has been a challenge for a few people, so we've had to be more flexible and understanding,” James said.*

**It's not just in workplace relationships that people have had to learn a new flexibility; meetings with clients and customers are also now done from people's homes.**

“I've had video chats with people with kids on their laps,” James said, adding that people appreciate it if you are accommodating to their non-business commitments.

Backbase works with around 80 large financial firms around the world, chiefly banks and credit unions such as HSBC, Metrobank and Virgin Money in the UK, helping them with their digital transformation.

“We're essentially a platform that delivers the customer facing channels, online websites, mobile apps, and increasingly we're spending time building out the employee experience as well,” explained James.

**You might expect customers to put off purchasing and investment during the crisis, but this has not been the case for Backbase's clients, as James explained.**

“

*What we're finding is, the more agile an organisation is, they're still making those big decisions and they're making them fast, because they're having to adopt very quickly. If anything they're telling us this is going to accelerate and intensify the digitisation of their processes and the user journeys that they want to support. This is not just in terms of the end users, there's also this really interesting focus on their staff,” he said.*

*One of our customers told us they saw a 7 times increase in the number of people enrolling onto their digital platforms in a week, so already they're seeing the benefits of investing in digital onboarding platforms such as the ones we produce.”*

In a world in which word of mouth recommendations are important, banks with a strong digital presence are going to come out of the pandemic particularly well, James adds.

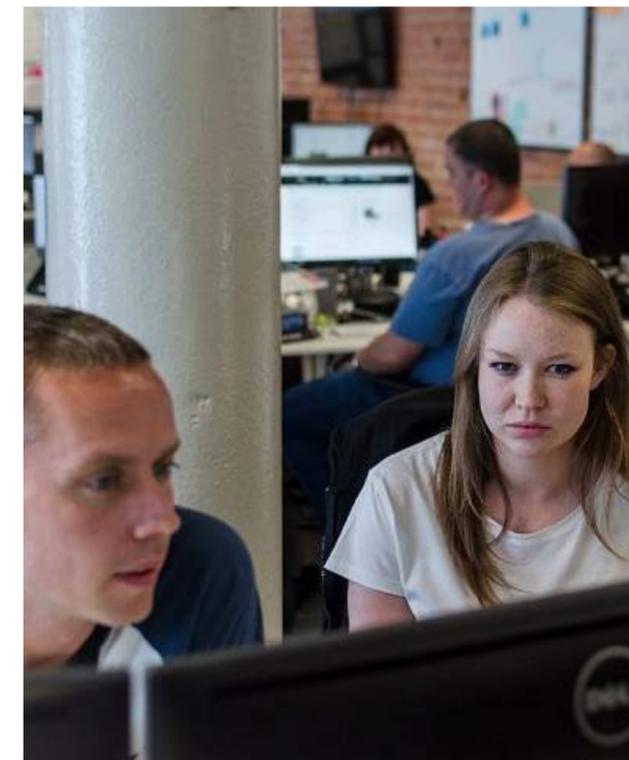
“We anticipate bank customers will be increasingly influenced by their online experience; it's the only way they're going to be experiencing their banks at present,” he said.

Backbase's customers are also revisiting their continuity plans in the light of their Covid-19 experience. Previously, many banks' continuity plans were based around ensuring their customers' could continue to access physical cash; but with people switching to online shopping and cash payments discouraged in the few shops that remain open, enabling and extending credit has become more important.

**“Our customers have told us that what they really value is flexibility in the products they've adopted, so all of a sudden we need to change the rule set so people can access credit,” James said.**

And as banks and credit unions close branches and shift to where their customers are, i.e. online, more investment is going into end user experiences. “One of the projects we have in Cardiff at the moment is trying to create a great experience, pulling together these systems they have but trying to streamline them and put the focus back on the customer relationships.”

The aim is to recreate the personalised experience bank customers enjoy when they visit their branches. “How do we optimise and streamline the time to get to the information that the customer support representative needs to get access to, so you can really have a meaningful conversation,” said James.



## BusinessNewsWales PodcastHub



PODCAST | VIDEO  
Wales Business  
Review  
– Episode 9

Welcome to the ninth episode of Wales Business Review.

This week former First Minister of Wales Carwyn Jones is joined by Kellie Beirne, Director of the Cardiff Capital Region, and Wayne Harvey, CBI Wales Chair Wales and Senior Partner at Deloitte.

What will the new normal look like? Which industries will thrive and which will suffer are just some of the topics discussed on this week's show.

LISTEN/WATCH NOW



**CHRIS SUTTON**

**OUT OF THE CRISIS,**

**A CHANCE FOR A**

**FRESH START**



# Out of the Crisis, a Chance for a Fresh Start



For more than six weeks there has been little that anyone has talked about other than the coronavirus and its impact. While the pandemic is far from over, thoughts are now inevitably turning to how and when we come out of the lockdown and start to rebuild our economy.

**Chris Sutton**

Director, Sutton Consulting

The challenge is to create a vision for the future that will preserve the old jobs, create new ones and generate the taxes that we will need to pay off the huge burden of extra costs that government has taken on. Our hope must be that the bounce back will be as quick as many analysts say it will.

Lifting the lockdown will be the easy part. Addressing the structural damage and consequent scarring to our economy by the necessary shutting down of so much economic activity will require government interventions that are bold and ambitious in scope. In Cardiff Capital Region the City Deal is an important part of the regional growth architecture, and can bring its local perspective to bear in unlocking pockets of growth and creating strategic drive and leadership.

“ One of the most striking features of the past few weeks is the massive experiment in working from home that has involved millions of people, particularly office workers. It is hard to believe that this won't change

attitudes in the future towards the practicality of home working, and mould new remote working practices.

On the other hand, predictions of the demise of the office are undoubtedly premature. Many businesses and workers will want to get back into their offices as soon as they can. For all the wonders of Zoom and Microsoft Teams, face to face encounters, whether with clients or colleagues, are still hard to beat.

So I don't foresee any rapid dropping off in the office market, especially when it comes to the more flexible Grade A office space that has featured so prominently in recent Cardiff city centre developments. However, Grade B office buildings in less sought after locations are likely to fall in value and may drag down the market as a whole. Combined with the shock to our retail and leisure sectors, this may call for a rethink in building use in some of our urban centres.

This is where boldness is called for. We need the ability to change building use more radically and quickly. Relaxation of planning restrictions in certain areas, with more use of zoning and simplified

planning, could help to reshape our towns and cities in a way that is more responsive to modern needs. If fewer offices and shops are required, we need to build to be able to convert structures to much needed residential use quickly and easily.

We should use the current crisis as an opportunity to empower local authorities to compulsorily purchase and regenerate large blocks of our town centres to create a more attractive mix of residential, leisure and retail space. Let's capitalise on this turmoil and build something better, in partnership between proactive local developers and empowered local authorities.

Boldness is also called for in our approach to manufacturing. This crisis has highlighted the re-shoring debate – which was already playing out because of Brexit – both in terms of the risk of long supply chains and what constitutes critical industries. We have off-shored production of critical industries such as PPE to China and seen the vulnerability of this.

There's an opportunity to be had here, but it requires us to rebuild and exploit local supply chains, using business support and investment in a smart, strategic way. Hand in hand with this is an aggressive approach to industrial sites and premises, to make sure companies have the right premises in the right locations to fulfil their needs.

Linked to location is the question of transport and connectivity. Whether it's from home working or because they were furloughed, millions of workers have been staying at home and barred from inessential travel. The effect on our transport networks has been spectacular. Towns and cities have seen the disappearance of the rush hour, motorways have become unclogged, revenues for public transport operators have collapsed.

Few, perhaps, will welcome the return of busier roads and dirtier air. But there are bound to be questions about the future direction of transport policy. Should we press ahead with efforts to persuade more people to give up their cars? Will there be the resources for new public transport networks? Whatever the answers, the present quietness at least gives us an opportunity to press ahead with much needed engineering works, whether it's on the M4 or the Metro, while traffic is at a minimum.

Finally, business rates. Governments at both ends of the M4 have sensibly released most retail and leisure businesses from the burden of rates for this financial year. But this shouldn't obscure the fact that the system was no longer fit for purpose. This crisis has accelerated the demise of the High Street, and a structural reform of business rates is needed to more equitably share the burden of funding local services between physical and online retailers.

We have gone through a testing time and there are more challenges and difficulties ahead. But there are also opportunities. The pandemic has given us a change to rethink our mindset, challenge assumptions and reimagine how our economy should operate. If we grasp this opportunity there is every chance Cardiff Capital Region will emerge stronger, more competitive and more resilient, and better equipped to thrive in the years ahead.

# How will Cardiff Capital Region Recover from Coronavirus?

As we enter the sixth week of lockdown, people's thoughts have inevitably begun to turn to the question of how and when will we come out of it.

While most people have willingly accepted the sacrifices demanded of them to slow the spread of the virus and limit the number of casualties, there is huge concern about the economic cost of the Government's measures, however necessary they seemed.

With a raft of indicators now showing that Britain is entering its steepest downturn for generations, even centuries, many people are wondering if they will have a job to go back to, and many business owners are worrying whether their companies can survive. Some will already know that the answer is no.

So how do we in the Cardiff Capital Region come out of the lockdown, and what challenges will we face as we try to rebuild our economy? And what opportunities does the recovery, when it comes, offer to build a more competitive, connected and resilient regional economy, better suited to face the demands of the 21st century?

In the weeks since the lockdown began the UK Government has put in place billions of pounds' worth of support for businesses and the self-employed, and Welsh Government has added its own extra packages of help, in some cases plugging holes left by Westminster's programmes. Cardiff Capital Region and the 10 local authorities within it have done what they can to help businesses access this support, and looked at what further help they can provide from their own resources.

Many businesses have been able to access this support, but others have fallen through the gaps, whether it be small home-based



start-ups that do not benefit from business rates' holidays, or businesses that can't get government-backed loans. The UK Government's Job Retention Scheme has been extended until the end of June, but it's not clear what will happen then.

For everyone involved, in government or business, the priority is people's health. But continued lockdown will take its toll on businesses and the public purse. The UK's Chief Medical Officer Prof Chris Whitty expects social distancing measures to be in place for the rest of the year. Schools are unlikely to re-open before June at the earliest, which probably means September in practice.

Any emergence from the lockdown is likely to be gradual. It may be possible for non-essential shops to re-open before long, with appropriate social distancing measures in place. Other business activities where people can't work from home, such as construction, could also be phased back in soon. Some housebuilders have indicated they plan to resume activity within the next couple of weeks.

Offices are likely to re-open later, as are leisure and hospitality businesses. Social activities that involve large gatherings, such as sports events or music festivals, are likely to be the last things to be permitted to start again.

However it happens – and with government worried about a second peak in infections, it could be months away rather than weeks – it will be important to keep supporting businesses as long as they need it. Government at all levels will have a role in providing the right environment for businesses that have

struggled through the lockdown to grow back into financial health.

The pandemic has been a testing time for everybody, but it has also given us some inspiring examples of how businesses and individuals can mobilise in a time of crisis to help their neighbours and the community at large.

Many businesses will have had no choice but to close down and furlough their workers. But some have been able, because of the nature of what they do, to turn over their production lines to making the vital equipment that our health and care sectors so desperately need. From distilleries making sanitisers to manufacturers designing and producing personal protective equipment, it's an example of peacetime mobilisation of resources that has no parallel.

Such businesses – and there are plenty in Cardiff Capital Region – have demonstrated an agility and creativity that will serve them well in the uncertain times ahead. That creative mindset will need to be shared more widely as we seek to revive and reconfigure our shocked economy.

Companies that can show that same creativity and agility will find opportunities, however bleak the short-term outlook might be. The retail, leisure, and hospitality sectors may have been thinned out, and office and commercial property markets weakened, but that will provide an opportunity for the reconstruction of our high streets on new, mixed use lines.

Businesses that have been able to supply their customers online will benefit from their loyalty when confidence picks up again. Key sectors such as medical diagnostics and cyber security will continue to grow.

“ The pandemic has also shown us the vulnerability of our overstretched supply chains, and the downside of offshoring. Globalisation will increasingly give way to localisation as we seek greater security of supply in more local suppliers. Here too there's an opportunity for businesses in our region.

Cardiff Capital Region's vision of a connected, competitive and resilient economy is still relevant, perhaps even more so. The economy will bounce back, and the recovery will give opportunities for new businesses to spring up and existing ones with the right approach to grow. The region has a chance, not just to repair the damage caused by the pandemic, but to restart in a new direction and with a new purpose.



# How CCR's Fintech's Have Adapted to Covid-19: Bipsync

For startup fintech Bipsync the Covid-19 pandemic has been a test of its ability to move to a 100% remote working model and continue to provide all its services to its clients.

The company has two offices: its New York headquarters which focuses on sales and marketing, and a Cardiff office where the product and technical side is based. Bipsync's 30 staff are split evenly between the two sites.

Head of marketing Jen Gambarini, who works in the firm's New York HQ, described what the company does. "We're a research management system working in the investment management space, from small hedge funds to sovereign wealth funds, across AIPAC, Europe and the US. Our clients use our software to do their fundamental research about investments; they work in the system creating notes, sharing content, putting their models in," she said.

Charlotte White, head of HR who works at Bipsync's Cardiff office, said the company was no stranger to remote working.

"For years we've had work flexibility in place to facilitate home working; it was a relatively seamless transfer from the office to our home environments. But we're not pretending this is a normal situation, we still had to make adjustments.

*We understand there's going to be upheavals with adjusting to working from home; everyone's trying to juggle childcare, looking after parents or grandparents, managing shopping, mental health or exercise. So if employees need to tailor their work time around other commitments, we're totally fine with that."*

As a fully cloud based operation, the company was ready for remote working from day one, but had never war gamed 100% remote working, Jen Gambarini said.

And although that shift into a fully home working model was straightforward and easy to achieve, she feels there is something lost by not working in an office that is not easily replaced.

"That ad hoc knowledge share is what you lose automatically; popping over to a colleague on the customer success team and talking through a particular product feature, and that will shift into a commercial conversation or you'll learn something else about a client. Trying to find a way to foster that knowledge share digitally is the gap," she said.

The biggest challenges have been in how people communicate within the company, according to Charlotte.

"We've always had Slack and Zoom, but we're using them differently now, we try to get as much face time as possible. We usually have a daily stand up in the morning in the Cardiff office, we're doing that as a video call now."

It's only natural that some people are better suited to working from home than others, she adds. The firm has increased the frequency of its one to one line management meetings to help people who are finding it difficult.

"We do touchy feely things too, like sending care packages to our employees. We make sure we check in on them without being intrusive," Charlotte said.

Jen Gambarini says that while the company will probably go back to an office-based way of

working, there will probably be more working from home in future and many who will probably work two or three days a week in the office.

"There's a lot of things we'll take away from this, like putting a sign up in Calendar saying please don't disturb me for the next two hours, I'm going to be working on something," she said.

*In our New York office we never used to have a 9am stand up, but now our 15-minute video chat every morning sets us up for the day. When we go back to an office environment I think we'll do it."*

Most of Bipsync's clients, like the firm itself, were already used to remote working. Jen Gambarini says they have been using the firm's cloud based services more, with average daily usage up.

"Our clients have seen a lot of volatility in the market, they've been busy. They've had to deal with a whole other barrage of work and we've had to be cognisant of that," she said.

*You can't say it's an opportunity for us because that's not the way we're thinking of it at all, but there is a reality that there are two buckets of products that come out of this either well or poorly. One is you're cloud enabled with a modern infrastructure and you enable remote work, and one is that you're not. We definitely fall into the positive bucket," she said.*

Sales conversations have shifted, she added. Remote working was always part of the conversation, now it's the first part.

"Overall the modern fintech company comes out of this well; that's the shift that's happening, it's just accelerated it. All those digital transformation products that were on the shelf are suddenly top of the pile," she added.

"We do touchy feely things too, like sending care packages to our employees. We make sure we check in on them without being intrusive,"



## BusinessNewsWales PodcastHub



PODCAST | VIDEO  
**Wales Business  
Review**  
- Episode 10

Welcome to the Tenth episode of Wales Business Review.

This week former First Minister of Wales Carwyn Jones is joined by Ashley Rogers, Director NWMD Business Council and Kevin Gardiner, board member of Cardiff Capital Region and MD and Global Investment Strategist at Rothschild & Co.

Some of the topics discussed on this week's show include:

- The Opportunity for Wales in the New Global Economy
- The Renewed Importance of City Region Growth Deals
- Economic stimulus - Can the Government afford Borrowing Levels
- What Does Economic Recovery Look like for Wales?

**LISTEN/WATCH NOW**



**KEVIN GARDINER**

**A GRIM DOWNTURN,**

**BUT THE OUTLOOK IS**

**NOT BLEAK**



# A Grim Downturn, But the Outlook is Not Bleak



In current circumstances it can seem insensitive even to talk of economics and finance. It should go without saying that our thoughts are with the families affected by this horrible illness, and our thanks go to the dedicated healthcare workers supporting them

**Kevin Gardiner**

Board member CCR Regional Skills Partnership, Rothschild Global Investment Strategist

We are in the middle of the most dramatic economic downturn in modern history. In the US, we've seen the number of new jobless claims you would expect to see in a full business cycle compressed into four weeks. In this country, the Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) has forecast a 35% drop in GDP for the second quarter.

This is a unique crisis in many ways – its scale, the suddenness with which it happened, the way it immediately became clear to everyone that this was to be a potent, wrenching downturn, and of course its cause: this is the first deliberate downturn, designed to stop the spread of Covid-19.

In one respect, however, it is similar to most others. When something dramatic happens we weren't anticipating, we feel chastened by our inability to spot it in advance. Having realised belatedly that we should have seen it coming, and how important it is, we extrapolate forward and think the economy will never recover. But it does, and I don't think this time will be any different.

There are countless imponderables at the moment, but it does look as if contagion is slowing in most of the countries involved, including the UK. This is allowing governments slowly to loosen the restrictions on travelling and meeting – restrictions which inevitably resulted in those economic closures. Even if contagion doesn't continue to slow, it is possible that the sheer scale of the potential damage being done may cause governments to modify the current approach.

Things may start to move on, then, and relatively soon, because damage on this scale – and which is hitting the poorest families hardest – isn't sustainable for more than weeks or months.

The support government and banks are offering won't be taken off the table the moment things start to move back in the right direction; so we could come out of this with an extended period of policy support alongside a revival of confidence, people going back to work, and an improvement in economic activity generally.

For the Economic Growth Partnership and the **City Deal**, what's really important is that we are about the long term, not just the next six months. So while we have to recognise the sensational nature of this downturn, we also have to recognise that the worst of it might not last for long: it started very abruptly, but might begin to lift relatively quickly too. The decline in GDP the OBR were forecasting for the second quarter was sensational, but the bounce back in GDP which they were predicting for the rest of the year was almost as dramatic.

This is nonetheless a terribly difficult time: the reductions in economic activity that we've seen are unprecedented. It's not just about dry economic statistics; business has stopped for many companies, so these are scary times for consumers and small businesses in particular, where support is most needed. The office of the **City Deal** is doing its bit to make sure that businesses are aware of what support is available during the emergency, and to publicise and put people in touch with sources of such support.

But we mustn't be deflected from our long-term focus, which is to try to deliver sustainable, equitable and commercially useful growth that can last, not just through the weeks and months of the crisis, but into the longer term.

Looking at that longer term, it's certainly likely that some things will change as a result of what we've been through, but maybe not as much as people think.

One thing that will probably change for the better is the way people view what we think of us as foundational skills, the key support roles played by people who are often overlooked. They are getting at last some recognition for their hard

work and care, and this appreciation may last into the recovery. We've always been keen to try to support the foundational economy, because we're charged in the **City Deal** not just with securing growth that is commercial, but growth that is also inclusive and fairer.

The technology sector, which we had firmly in our sights to begin with, can only be strengthened by this crisis, and people are going to be focusing more, not less, on life sciences too. It's not just about the high value added, research-intensive activities: we're also seeing new technology like 3D printing being utilised to create and fill the gaps in the shortage of PPE that we're all reading about. Technology always has the potential to percolate across a wide range of businesses, and is the single most important contributor to rising prosperity generally.

We have plunged headlong into a deep, dark forest, and we're not out of it yet. But there's no reason to believe we won't be out before too long, and every reason to think that the longer-term outlook for the **City Deal** area remains bright.





# How Covid-19 Could Herald a New Dawn for Welsh Manufacturing

The coronavirus pandemic has changed the way millions of us live and work. It has made many of us do things we would not have thought possible three or four months ago. Crucially, it has also made us question some of our long-held assumptions, and think again about the nature of our economy and society.

Nowhere is this more true than in manufacturing. Previously the commonly held view was that manufacturing had a lesser role to play than services, and was in long-term decline; that for the sake of efficiency most firms would offshore much of their activity; and that manufacturing required long and convoluted supply chains as companies sought the best places to make the myriad components that make up modern manufactured goods.

Britain had long since ceased being the workshop of the world; the ubiquitous words Made in China showed who now claimed that title. Never mind that Britain is still the 9th largest manufacturing nation in the world, and that the average salary in the sector is 13% higher than in the rest of the economy.

Covid-19 has exposed the weakness of our assumptions. As governments closed borders and transport ground to a halt, our reliance on long supply chains suddenly looked less efficient. Equipment essential for helping our overstretched health service tackle the virus was unavailable, partly because of the sudden rise in demand, and partly because there were no local suppliers.

In this emergency, many manufacturers stepped up to the plate with impressive speed and agility. Companies that had never before made medical equipment pulled together their design teams, worked out designs, had them approved, made the tools they needed and reorganised their production lines, all within a matter of days.

Companies in all sectors used new technologies like 3D printing to face masks and other vital equipment. Nothing like it had been seen in Britain since carmakers and other manufacturers turned their factories over to making tanks and fighter aircraft during the Second World War.

It's not the only way our experience in this pandemic resembles a wartime mobilisation. The responsibilities government has taken on – guaranteeing wages, backing loans,

deferring taxes and taking on debt – are unlike anything we have seen for decades.

As our thoughts turn towards how and when we come out of the lockdown and return to something like normality, questions arise about what lessons we can learn and how we should think about reconstructing our economy.

We don't know what shape our economy is going to be in over the next few months. Although the Government has extended the Job Retention Scheme until the end of June, it's still possible we could see a big rise in redundancies when it does end. It's difficult to imagine normal economic life returning until an effective vaccine has been developed and produced in quantity.

We don't yet know how many businesses will be able to survive the loss of trade, how many are unable to take advantage of government-backed loans or other support, or how many are unwilling to take on the extra debt. We don't know whether people will go on a post-virus spending spree when the lockdown ends, or if they will be cautious with their money.

**“What we do know is that there is an opportunity in the agility that some of our best manufacturing businesses have shown.”**

What we do know is that there is an opportunity in the agility that some of our best manufacturing businesses have shown. We should be thinking again about our manufacturing supply chains and

our security of supply. Let's remember that, as we come out of the economic shock of Covid-19, we will be heading once again into the uncharted territory of Brexit, with the Government still insisting the transition period to new trading arrangements will end on December 31. We have no idea what trading relationships we will have with the EU or the rest of the world.

In these circumstances, it makes sense to reimagine our manufacturing sector. Suddenly globalisation looks less attractive than localisation. In a post-virus, post-Brexit world, reshoring makes more sense than offshoring. We should do what we can to strengthen our manufacturing sector.

It's above all our younger, more agile firms that have shown their mettle in this crisis. The problem is, many of our younger firms are too small to take advantage of the opportunities that are out there. There is a need for collaboration, for working together so our businesses can grow into new markets.

The time may be right for a new effort to promote manufacturing, and help Cardiff Capital Region's manufacturers both compete on the world stage and provide the country with greater security of supply at home. Companies could find new ways of working together to make the most of opportunities, and government support the sector with new incentives and well-planned investments.

Above all, the country could awaken to a renewed recognition of the critical importance of manufacturing to our life as a nation. In this possible new dawn for manufacturing, it's vital that Cardiff Capital Region does not miss out.

# Graduates Making Their Mark in CCR Businesses: Front Door Communications

Front Door Communications (FD Comms) is one of many small businesses in the CCR who are doing their best to maintain business as usual in these unprecedented times.

Founding partner Kath Chadwick explained how the Cardiff-based PR, social media and content marketing agency was ahead of the curve when the order to work from home came on March 23, having made the decision to close the office a week earlier.

“The biggest challenge for us was less about access to systems and the network capacity issues that larger businesses have had to contend with – we all have everything we need on our laptops and are pretty self-sufficient. For us it was more about ensuring that, with all the extra demands on our time at home with families and young children to attend to, we were able to provide that round the clock support to our clients,” Kath said.

FD Communications are a small close knit team well acquainted with each other’s personal circumstances, and able to pull together to create the much needed flexibility that those with young children in particular need.

#### Kath added:

“I am really proud of the way we have all supported each other in the new way of working, particularly the care and compassion we continuously show each other whilst simultaneously continuing to deliver the service our clients expect and deserve from us.

*I am also really proud to be part of a business network that cares about fellow businesses. I have been super impressed by the way some clients have insisted on paying fees on day of invoicing to help us with cash flow, and also with organisations like the IoD for the care and concern they have shown to us. It’s heartening to feel part of a close-knit business community that wants to support each other in any way we can throughout these difficult times.”*

Former graphic design student Annie Harding recently joined Front Door under the **Cardiff Capital Region Graduate Scheme**. She said she was lucky to have settled into her job, which is mostly putting out content on social media, before the lockdown began.

“We were sent to work from home before all the regulations came about as a lot of our clients are remote anyway, and doing social media it doesn’t make a huge difference to me,” she said.

Annie has been busier since the virus began as clients want to put out more content. There’s more news to monitor and things to be aware of when running social media for clients.

“Business has ramped up and we are working harder to provide clients with the support they need during this time. I’ve personally been putting out far more during this period, but we have to be careful with the output we now put out as it needs to convey the right message,” Annie added.

*We need to be tactful with every post. Everything seems to be connected, one way or another, to COVID-19 these days.”*

Annie said she prefers working in the office than at home because it’s easier to communicate with the rest of the team, but adds that Front Door has been very supportive.



Front Door Team

“We have a lot more conference calls to stay connected with each other. We also use WhatsApp to stay in contact, and the team are great in making sure everyone is comfortable with their tasks and checking we have all the information and equipment we need to do our job effectively. They gave me a laptop stand and I basically now have my office at home, which is great,” she said.

#### Kath said:

“Annie has adapted brilliantly to the change in ways of working. Like most graduates her grasp of technology is fantastic so that presents no issue at all; but she has also used this opportunity to pick up the baton and run with it, showing us what she’s capable of doing with minimal supervision.

Yes, for sure, discussing concepts and reviewing output takes slightly longer when it’s done via telephone and shared screens, but it has had no impact on our ability to continue to ensure we deliver first class content to our clients. Annie’s enthusiasm also keeps the rest of us going when we’re juggling the day to day strains of life, as well as working full time.”

If you are evaluating your capacity and need any further resource to manage at this time, the **Cardiff Capital Region Graduate Scheme** may be able to help. The Scheme can provide a free and streamlined recruitment service that can match your immediate resourcing needs to high-skilled graduate talent in the region.

If you are interested in finding out more please get in touch with either [laura.carter@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:laura.carter@cardiff.gov.uk) or [Geraldine.OSullivan@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:Geraldine.OSullivan@cardiff.gov.uk).



## How CCR's FinTechs Have Adapted to Covid-19:



**Currencycloud**

Currency Cloud is one more among the growing number of international fintechs that have set up in Cardiff. The company, set up in 2012, specialises in cross-border payments and also maintains offices in London, Amsterdam, and New York.

Currency Cloud's customers are banks and other financial institutions from around the world, including Visa and Starling Bank, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Head of platform engineering function Anouska Streets describes what it does as "simplifying and taking away the complexity from transnational transactions."

She described how the company adapted to the rapidly changing situation as lockdown loomed.

“ It happened over a very short period of time; we started shutting down travel between our offices, like London and Cardiff. That made us start thinking about how we collaborate as an organisation.

We're fortunate in that most of our operations are in the cloud, all our operational tools and platforms run in the cloud. Provided we have decent internet connectivity, the ability to work from people's homes is straightforward.”

There were, however, managerial problems to overcome with so many people working from home who hadn't done so before, and in very different circumstances.

“ Often people working from home before were without distractions; now people are working from home with young families and partners also at home,” said Anouska.

We are extremely flexible; people can work around their commitments. We're lucky to have a very sympathetic CEO.”

In today's world, people expect to be able seamlessly to move money around the world. Despite the move to remote working, there's been no interruption in the services Currency Cloud provides. In fact, customers have probably benefited from the longer working day as people choose their own hours to work, and start fresher without a long and stressful commute.

“ We're seeing people are working harder than ever. I've been really impressed with how people risen to the challenge,” Anouska said.

The organisation has done a really good job in encouraging them to take breaks.

“ We have various activities during the working day, we have beginners' yoga online, online games like Pictionary in

the middle of working day, breaks. They're not compulsory but they are encouraged.”

Anouska has also noticed a change in the way people are making decisions.

“ Normally in meetings we would brainstorm or whiteboard. It's difficult to do that remotely, so we're getting more written proposals and more considered feedback, because people have time to read and reflect. So the quality of decisions will be better,” she said.

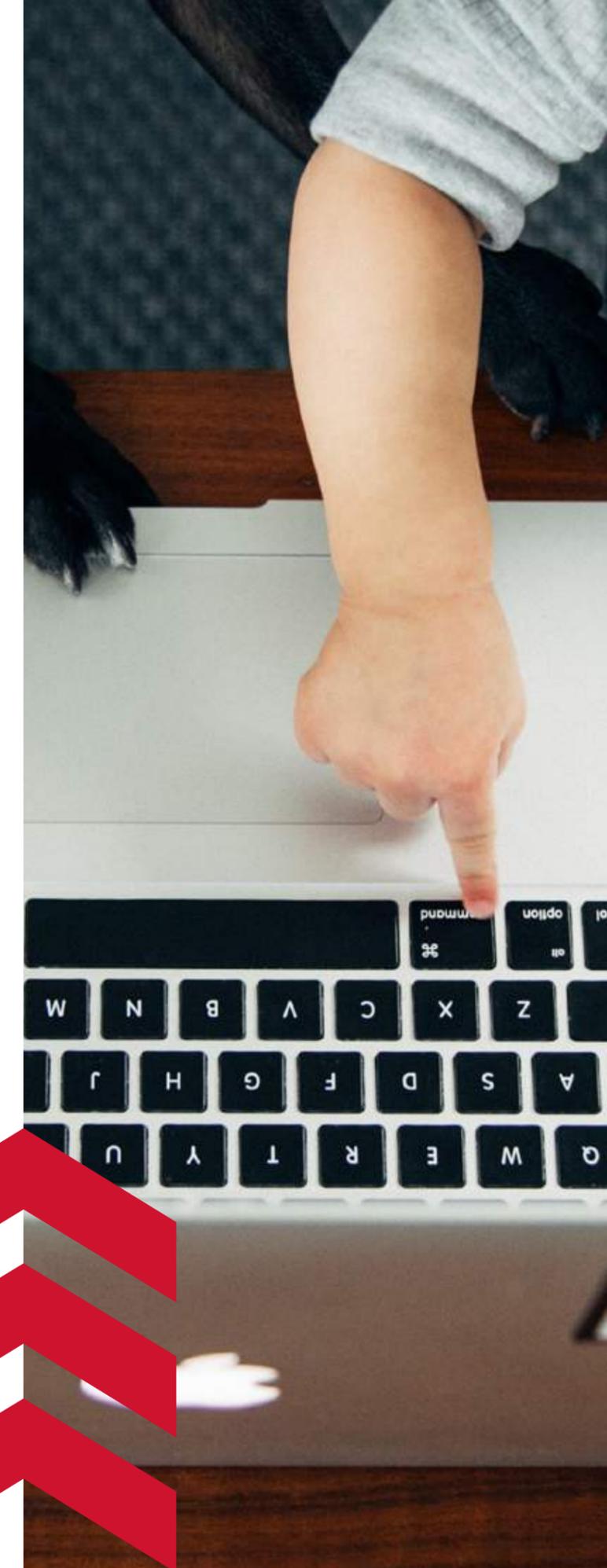
She also thinks people are working because of a reduced cognitive load.

“ Normally in the office people are stopping by all the time with questions and requests. Now I'm working from home people are thinking harder before they approach, so it's a higher quality interaction,” she said.

She added she thought they would try to recreate some of these improvements when they eventually return to the office. For herself, Anouska says she'd like to split her time more between the office and home in the future.

There are some things for which being in an office will always be preferable. Just before the lockdown, Currency Cloud had been through a large recruitment exercise, so 15 new recruits have had to join the firm remotely.

“ That's difficult, to give them a good onboarding experience. Even the technical side, making sure they have the right equipment, is logistically difficult. But this helps us make our processes more resilient going forward,” said Anouska.



# How CCR's Medtech Firms Help Fight Covid-19: Bond Digital Health

One of our strongest weapons in the fight against Covid-19 is the ability to test. In some countries their widespread testing is credited with their lower death rate from the disease, while in others the lack of testing is blamed for a higher mortality.

But even those countries where testing has been more extensive could benefit from testing more. In Germany, for example, while testing has been more common than elsewhere, it has been patchy and uneven.

As with many things, the cheapest and easiest tests to use are not necessarily the best ones, while the really good tests are expensive and time consuming, and need to be done by trained professionals. So there's a demand for an easy to use, affordable test that tells us more than the cheaper ones currently available.

Cardiff-based medtech company, Bond Digital Health, is playing a big part in developing just such a test. The company was set up in 2016 by Ian Bond, an expert patient with the British Lung Foundation who suffered from COPD (chronic pulmonary obstructive disease). Ian set up the company to create a patient self-management app that would help him communicate with his doctors and monitor his own health.

Commercial director Phil Groom joined the company three years ago from Astra Zeneca. Shortly afterwards, Bond started working with Mologic on a connectivity & data management platform for a lateral flow diagnostic test for COPD that Mologic was

developing. Through this work Bond met other companies working in the lateral flow field, including Canadian firm Sona Nanotech. It's with Sona that Bond is now working on a test for Covid-19.

Lateral flow tests are all around us and have been used for decades. The pregnancy test used by millions each year is a lateral flow test. Originally, pregnancy tests were binary, giving a simple yes or no answer; but modern ones can give more information, such as the number of weeks since conception.

Currently there are two main types of test being used for coronavirus. Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests are expensive, up to £300 each, and need to be analysed in a lab which takes several hours and needs to be done by a trained professional. Their advantage is that they can tell whether someone is currently carrying the active coronavirus.

Portable antibody tests are lateral flow tests. They are much cheaper, around £5-£10 each, can be done anywhere and produce a result quickly. But they only reveal whether someone has recently had a flu-like infection and they generate limited information. According to recent data from Wuhan, some patients (maybe as much as 10%) can test positive even after being successfully treated, which highlights the need for a better solution.

The antigen test that Sona is developing combine the best of both types. As a lateral flow test it is cheap (less than £50), quick and easy to use, but unlike antibody tests it can tell if someone is carrying the active coronavirus in real-time, at the point of testing.

Sona will get the basic version out quickly to help governments carry out large scale testing. Bond Digital Health is working on the next stage, which is a digitally enabled test, connected to the cloud and the web. This will enable scientists to collect additional data on blood groups, ethnicity, age, underlying health conditions, and location, instantly map those results against the results of the test and share the data with government agencies, the WHO and others.

“ You'll have real-time results with proper epidemiological data that will inform governments on who's at risk, where they are, and who's got the virus; then they can plan and deploy their resources where they're needed,” said Phil Groom.

Web-connected diagnostics giving real-time shareable results, geo-mapped, is critical. Decision makers are firefighting for the next six months, but planning for the next wave of the virus in the autumn.”

Bond has been working for two and a half years on its platform, called Transform, which Phil Groom describes as “the next generation of intelligent diagnostics”. They had planned to launch it at the Advanced Lateral Flow conference in San Diego in October, but are fast tracking its development to get it ready by the summer.

Before the coronavirus struck, Bond was developing Transform for use with cholera, malaria and HIV tests, and for veterinary testing such as for bovine TB.

“ People want to be able to do diagnostic testing in 10 minutes, in a field or in a car park, and

they want the results straight from the device onto the app, into the cloud and back down onto a web dashboard,” said Phil Groom.

We were developing this platform for people with biosensors and wearable tech (glucose monitoring, kidney disease monitoring) but we made a decision a year ago to focus exclusively on lateral flow.”

Bond has been able to transfer all its operations to remote working since the pandemic reached the UK. The software developers prefer working from home most days, marketing manager Victoria Agova explained.

“ We've built a culture of trust which makes it easier to collaborate and work from home. There is a general understanding that everyone can be flexible, as long as we keep the conversation going, and it has been going just as well if not better since we've been working from home,” she said.

Next generation intelligent diagnostics such as Bond's Transform will become available for everybody as a result of the rapid growth of the industry, fulfilling a dream of the company's founders, Phil Groom said.

“ It is our vision to democratise affordable point of care diagnostics for everyone,” he said.

For developing countries this is a godsend, because this platform will be ready for their malaria, cholera, and Ebola testing, and it will genuinely democratise this level of testing for the future.”

# New Chair of Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Regional Cabinet

Councillor Anthony Hunt was yesterday elected Chair of the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) City Deal Regional Cabinet.

The Torfaen County Borough Council Leader was unanimously elected to the role by the leaders of the nine other CCR City Deal local authority partners at the annual general meeting of the Regional Cabinet.

Anthony Hunt brings with him a wealth of experience gained at all levels of government having worked in parliament, in Whitehall and in the National Assembly of Wales prior to taking up his current position of Leader of Torfaen Borough Council in December 2016. Anthony is also a Trustee of the Bevan Foundation and has held the Regional Cabinet portfolio role for Digital and more recently, the Foundational Economy.

## Councillor Hunt said:

*I am honored to be elected to this role. I would like to thank Andrew Morgan for his leadership during his time in office and also pay tribute to all the Leaders and officers who have helped get our City Deal to its current position – this has truly been a team effort and will continue to be so.*

*I am passionate about our ambition to become a truly Connected, Competitive and Resilient region. We will only achieve that by working closely with partners across the public and private sectors, especially the fantastic business community in our region.*

*The last few weeks have been an immense challenge to our region, to the health and wellbeing of our people, to the way public services work and to our regional economy. The challenge is plain for all to see, yet our region has significant strengths in many key sectors, which we need to build upon.*

*We need to make sure we're at the heart of shaping our region's economic recovery, ensuring that all parts of our region, from coast to valleys, can share in future prosperity. No community or group of people should be left behind, and our work on the foundational economy is key to that. I also want to*

*see a rethink in how we value certain sectors and occupations, putting local wealth building at the heart of our collective effort."*

## Councillor Morgan said:

*I am delighted that Councillor Hunt has been elected to succeed me and am confident that Anthony will bring the required energy, drive and leadership to the role.*

*We are now in the position where we have a sizable portfolio of investment opportunities in our pipeline. These projects will be even more critical as we begin the process of helping to re-build the economy and support our places after a sustained period of disruption with flooding and now, the devastating impact of the Coronavirus pandemic.*

*I will be continuing to play a full role on the Joint Cabinet representing RCT and, in my role now as Leader of WLGA, I look forward to further supporting CCR and continuing to work with Welsh Government and private sector organisations as we progress to the next stages."*

Councillor Peter Fox, Leader of Monmouthshire County Council, and Councillor Huw Thomas, Leader of City of Cardiff Council, were elected as Vice-Chairs of the Regional Cabinet.

The CCR City Deal is a £1.2 billion deal to unlock significant economic growth across the Cardiff Capital Region.

The Regional Cabinet was set up in 2016 to provide the leadership, vision and strategic direction for the Cardiff Capital Region; help shape and manage the City Deal programme and structure; integrate and align the City Deal agenda with the Metro; prioritise projects which demonstrate the potential to achieve real economic improvements across the region; establish a secure platform for development encouraging alignment of relevant functions and activities and strategic application of funds as part of a fully integrated City Region approach; engage with wider stakeholders to encourage and support a collaborative approach to make the Cardiff Capital Region a success.

**The ten local authorities are: Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Monmouthshire, Newport, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Torfaen, and Vale of Glamorgan.**



**ANTHONY HUNT**

**WHAT WE MUST DO**

**IN THE YEAR AHEAD**



# What we Must do in the Year Ahead



Our thoughts at the moment are principally with those in our communities who have been most affected by the coronavirus, whether it's through the loss of a loved one, or from the impact of the lockdown on their livelihood or business.

**Anthony Hunt**

Leader Torfaen Country Borough Council and Chair CCR Regional Cabinet

As the Cardiff Capital Region, we must also think about what we can do to help, and how we can step in where we have an ability to influence things. In particular, we must think about what we can do that is distinct from what other people are doing, so we don't duplicate or compete with things that the UK Government, Welsh Government or local authorities are doing in their areas. There are some things that we can do very well at our level; some things that local authorities can do better at their level; and some things that the UK Government and Welsh Government can do best at their level.

In the situation created by Covid-19, we need to pause for thought. There are three strands to what we do as a city region, and each of them is affected by the pandemic.

Firstly, there are the specialist areas where we have a competitive advantage as a region. Compound semiconductors is one such area; medtech is another, which is very much in focus at the moment. The Medi Park at Cwmbran, based on the new Grange University Hospital and featuring a hub for research and development into new drugs

and medical technologies, was due to open next year but has been made ready to use this year to help us tackle the virus.

Another strand is where we're looking to bring on infrastructure, whether it's physical infrastructure such as transport, or digital. The experience of the lockdown, with so many of us working remotely, has highlighted the importance of having the best digital infrastructure that we can if we want to build the competitive and resilient region we aspire to.

On transport, we don't yet know how our recent experience is going to affect people's attitudes to travel and public transport as we come out the lockdown. We may see many more people walking or cycling as they observe social distancing. We need to keep a close look and remain agile in our response to changing demands in our communities.

Finally, there is the foundational economy, which has come to the fore in recent weeks, particularly the care sector. The crisis has had a massive impact on SMEs across our region, and we need to make sure that we give them sufficient consideration.

We need to talk to them about their concerns and priorities and how we can best help them. There are a number of assumptions we might have made pre-coronavirus about people's ability to borrow which we can't make post-coronavirus.

Our approach to the foundational economy can be genuinely transformational, or it can become one of those phrases that are parroted but don't actually change the way we work. Studies show that the most deprived communities, within our region and globally, are the most vulnerable to the health and economic impacts of the virus.

Our region is different from many others in that we don't have a single metropolitan centre; we have the cities along the M4, then we have the rural areas and the valley towns. That makes our work with the foundational economy key; ensuring local supply chains are maximised and that there is good employment close to home for all communities.

The Welsh Government are keen to work with us on this, but we need to flesh out in the Capital Region what we can do to bring on the foundational economy. The care sector, for example, badly needs transformation because at the moment it's built on low wages.

As the new chair of the Cardiff Capital Region's Regional Cabinet I am optimistic about the future. The leaders of our 10 local authorities, the City Deal staff, and the members of our expert panels, all work together well as a team, leaving politics and egos aside. We are a small region on an international scale, and we need to work together or we will miss our opportunities.

The foundation that we build as a partnership is going to be important not just for the City Deal; we all hope this is the start of wider long-term regional working, and that we can really make a difference and make the systemic change that parts of our region need.

**“ We're the gardeners in this, not the garden; we're trying to create a situation where the region can flourish. If our businesses thrive and grow, and our communities become more resilient and prosperous, in the conditions that we have created for them, then we will have achieved what we set out to do. The pandemic throws up some fresh challenges, but doesn't alter the fundamentals of our situation or what we need to do to improve it.**



# What Role will the CCR City Deal Play in Helping the Region Recover from Covid-19

The response to the coronavirus pandemic is causing a massive economic shock, the effects of which will certainly last for months, if not years. It is also causing people to rethink all sorts of ideas they have about the way the free economy works, and the shape of global, national and local economies in the years to come.

In the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR), work is underway to ensure that the plans and strategies the City Deal had put in place before the pandemic enable it to play a full role in helping the region tackle the economic impact of the lockdown, and emerge in the aftermath, more resilient and capable of delivering a positive and enduring legacy.

**A three phase approach to Interventions is being considered:**

**In the first phase**, the emphasis is on helping businesses get the most from the array of support programmes that have been put in place by the UK and Welsh governments by providing accurate and up to date information. In addition, the CCR will gather evidence about the impact of the pandemic on different sectors, which will help it to develop more bespoke support, and reduce the risk of social harm from the sharp downturn.

Finally, the CCR will look again at its planned programmes and investments in areas such as housing, graduate skills and transport, to see whether they need updating in the light of what has happened during the pandemic. There may be opportunities for more differentiated approaches, for example, to assess the balance of infrastructure needed in the future – across roads and digital – as well as rebalancing travel in the region away from the current ratios of 80:10:10 for private car use, public transport and active travel.

**The second phase** will see the CCR helping businesses as we gradually emerge from economic hibernation. More digital and virtual forms of business support will be required to encourage entrepreneurs set up new businesses, which tend to be responsible for most new job creation. New funds will be set up to help mitigate the effects of the lockdown on businesses. These could include: an SME Co-investment Fund, designed to support businesses in priority sectors during scale-up; Investment Readiness support to help businesses access finance by raising the quality of their proposals; and a Strategic Premises Fund intended to increase the number, mix and diversity of businesses who can operate differently and locate outside the region's main cities.

Another proposal is for a Rebuilding Local Economies Challenge Programme, aimed at building new thinking, ways of working, and products to deliver new momentum to the regional foundational economy as it recovers from the lockdown.

The development of CCR's medtech cluster could be accelerated, through the CCR's Investment Framework, building on the manufacturing businesses that have diversified during the pandemic and playing to strengths in rapid sanitisation, 3D printing of medical devices, data mapping, alternative materials for face shields, and in new diagnostics and devices. There is real potential for this to support higher level policy goals such as localising critical supply chains.

Finally in this phase, the CCR will respond quickly to businesses in key sectors that have fallen between the cracks in the UK and

Welsh Government's support schemes, to help stabilise them through new products and support where there is a demonstrable need, such as convertible equity, guarantees and provision of security and collateral backing.

**For the third phase**, CCR has reiterated its commitment to promoting the growth of key sectors which it had already identified as the ones that would play a critical role in the region's future economic success; in particular data and digital, creative, infrastructure, compound semiconductors, cyber, medtech, and fintech. In addition, there will be a focus on renewing the foundational economy, helping the food, farming, retail, and tourism sectors adapt and thrive in the face of disruptive forces of AI and machine learning.

Finally, the CCR will aim to improve the productivity of medium-sized firms, of which there are around 1,300 across the region employing between 50 and 249 people each. Capital Region firms in this category are underperforming compared to their counterparts in the rest of the UK, and the CCR would aim to end that underperformance by sharing best practice, providing networking opportunities and giving access to a high level executive education programme.

Taken together, all the proposals in this three-step plan amount to a very substantial intervention by CCR to help businesses and the regional economy bounce back from the shock of the coronavirus lockdown. While the CCR cannot change the wider national and global economic context, nor shape by itself, so-called Covid futurology, it intends to continue to make sense of the cross-currents, understand the drivers that might shape what comes next and do whatever it can to help make regional businesses and communities fit to face an uncertain future.



# Graduates Making Their Mark in CCR Businesses: **Kontroltek**

When recent graduate Emily Longden started a new job on March 16 she had no idea that a week later the UK would be in a lockdown.

The company she works for, Bridgend based industrial repairs business Kontroltek, was already making preparations, however, fitting temporary screens to workbenches for example.

“It was busy as you can imagine and everyone was trying to plan ahead knowing the virus is coming and we may be in ‘lockdown’. I still haven’t managed to meet all the people I work with, and if I have it was no more than a hello during my first week,” she said.

Emily, who hopes to start studying for her Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) qualifications soon, was given a project she could do from home, collecting and analysing data on Kontroltek’s customer base so they could draw conclusions about their penetration across different industry sectors and regional demographics.

“It’s great to be able to put my data analysis skills to use and be able to add value. I think the work I am doing now will be vital for my company when all this calms down a little,” she said.

The circumstances of her start meant she wasn’t able to ease into the company and learn about it in the normal way, although she is aware that it is doing key work such as making 3D printed protective masks for frontline NHS workers.

“As I’ve been focussed on my project exclusively I don’t know too much about what everyone else is doing outside of my own project’s bubble, but I am keen to learn,” she said.

The great thing is that they are putting great trust in me to get on with my work, and I’m determined to repay that by doing the very best I can.”

Finance and operations director Carl Waters said Emily had shown great adaptability in being able to focus on her new project despite not having had a normal introduction to the company.

#### He added:

“Despite her very limited experience of Kontroltek, Emily is proving to be a great asset for us. Whilst unable to undertake the intended programme of work right now, she has been actively engaged at home in using her analytical skills to profile our sector and customer mix across different regional demographics.

This work will prove invaluable in due course in helping us derive a focused growth strategy for a post Covid-19 world, and we are delighted at the great progress she is making.”

Emily joined Kontroltek through the Cardiff Capital Region’s Graduate Scheme, learning about the role online.

#### She said:

“I think the Scheme is a great thing to keep Welsh graduates in Wales by getting them working in a Welsh company. I’m hoping to progress at Kontroltek as much as possible and hopefully start my ILM qualification as soon as possible too.”

If you are evaluating your capacity and need any further resource to manage at this time, the **Cardiff Capital Region Graduate Scheme** may be able to help. The Scheme can provide a free and streamlined recruitment service that can match your immediate resourcing needs to high-skilled graduate talent in the region.

If you are interested in finding out more please get in touch with either [laura.carter@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:laura.carter@cardiff.gov.uk) or [Geraldine.OSullivan@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:Geraldine.OSullivan@cardiff.gov.uk).



**SIMON PIROTTE**

**HOW THE WELSH FE  
SECTOR IS PLAYING ITS  
PART IN THE CRISIS**



# How the Welsh FE Sector is Playing its Part in the Crisis



**“Being positive in a negative situation is not naïve... it’s leadership.”**  
–Ralph Marston

**Simon Pirotte**

CEO and Principal at Bridgend College and CCR Economic Growth Partnership Board Member

Covid-19 has presented us all with many challenges but the Welsh further education (FE) sector has shown its ability to react and adapt quickly and with great flexibility during the current crisis. The pandemic is an awful situation and has cost precious lives but as is always the case in dreadful circumstances, human beings demonstrate their resilience and creativity.

Often, there’s a misunderstanding about what we do as FE colleges. The general public knows what we mean by school or university but FE is less understood, and perhaps that is because we provide such a wide range of educational opportunities to a broad range of learners, from 14-16 year olds following a junior apprenticeship programme to students studying at postgraduate level. A surprising statistic is that more than half of Wales’ post-16 learners are taught in our 13 FE colleges.

The sector has talked a lot over recent years about moving towards more blended learning with more digital delivery, and we have made incremental shifts in that direction. But within a few days this March, we transformed ourselves. Every college has moved to some form of online delivery in such

a short space of time. I don’t think we could have achieved this at the same pace and with the same sense of urgency pre Covid-19. It’s been really quite remarkable to see the innovation and resilience in the FE sector’s staff as they have grappled with a new way of working.

Just like in other sectors, the pandemic has us all thinking about how we operate and how we can do things differently. Recently, for example, we had our first virtual open day at Bridgend College. The technology worked really well with great levels of engagement from the public and prospective students, and lots of positive feedback. When we return to the ‘new normal’, will we go back to the old ways of working with the traditional style of an open day? Or a more blended approach using the best of the traditional and the new? We are all asking these kinds of questions across all our operations.

At Bridgend College, like many organisations, we’ve been doing a lot of work around sustainability. We are committed to making significant reductions to our carbon footprint. We are now questioning those ‘essential’ face to face meetings. Do we all need to travel those distances to a central venue? Across

the world we are seeing the reduction in carbon emissions. I usually spend a minimum of 10 hours a week travelling to and from work in the car. Not only am I more productive now, but I’m doing my bit to reduce carbon emissions. Multiply that by 700 staff at the College and that is a significant contribution.

So there are certainly lessons to be learnt from this experience, and we’d be foolish not to take advantage of them going into the future. There are some things that work very well digitally and some that work less well; and we need to take that lesson forward in our approach to blended learning. Some learners are more engaged digitally than face to face because that’s their preferred learning style, and others less so; we’ve seen some hard to reach learners that are engaging much more via digital platforms.

Currently, one of the biggest challenges is around assessment of qualifications. There’s been a lot of talk in the media about how GCSE and A-level students will receive estimated grades because they’re not able to sit their exams this summer. Less noticed, but just as important, is what happens to those learners taking vocational qualifications or following apprenticeship programmes. For example, the economy will need plumbers as we climb out of recession, but would you want a plumber to service your boiler if no-one had ensured s/he was occupationally competent to do it? You can’t calculate a grade for that. So we are grappling with this issue, and how we might allow small groups of learners to return to complete practical assessments while ensuring the health and safety of both staff and learners.

This in turn will have an impact on incoming learners next academic year, as it will take longer to complete these assessments for current learners as we follow medical advice with smaller group sizes. This will put a huge strain on resources and budgets. Welsh Government has been extremely supportive of the sector, but as we all know there will be huge fiscal challenges moving forward.

At time of writing, there are more questions than answers. But the can do FE sector will rise to the challenge. Positive and creative leadership is required at all levels of our organisations and you may rest assured that our staff will approach these challenges with the dedication, commitment and flexibility that they showed at the beginning of the crisis.

**As Charles Swindoll said:**

**“ We are all faced with a series of great opportunities, brilliantly disguised as impossible situations.”**



# Graduates Making Their Mark in CCR Businesses: South Wales Chamber of Commerce

Henry Hopkins started working with the South Wales Chamber of Commerce as an international trade executive just three months before the coronavirus lockdown.

As a recent graduate, he didn't find the transition to working from home too difficult.

“ I was unemployed for a period after university so I have some experience of long periods indoors,” he said.

*In some respects also it's not a great deal of change from that fallow period after studying that many people go through. The key difference is that now I have a job and an income and I am very grateful for that*

*I think I've been proactive in not letting it get to me, realising you can only do your small part and stick to the rules. I keep myself busy, stick to a routine much the same as I would do in the office.”*

The hardest thing, he said, was adjusting to not being able to meet colleagues every day.

“ The whole team have been great in ensuring that everyone keeps the communication flow going. We are a close knit unit used to being able to chat to one another at any time so at first it was hard, but now we are all getting used to Microsoft Teams meetings and telephone 1-2-1s,” he said.

Henry's role at the South Wales Chamber of Commerce involves dealing with large and varied documentation on matters of trade, but he said the company had been excellent in replicating the workplace environment in his home with full desktop and printing capability.

“ There was a large paper based dimension to my role pre Covid-19, but increasingly that is becoming more and more digitalised. I am having so many more electronic applications now as everyone adapts to the change in ways of working.

*It's what the British Chambers of Commerce have been pushing for some time so in that respect it's all good – and we get the added bonus of saving more trees in the process too,” he said.*

Henry, who graduated in French and Business Management, said he hopes to stay with the South Wales Chamber of Commerce because he enjoys the work and likes the place he works.

“ I'd love to one day work for the Civil Service, possibly in the Department of International Trade in London,” he added.

His experience with the Cardiff Capital Region Graduate Scheme, through which he found his job, had been very positive, he said.

“ I would advocate the scheme to anyone looking for a graduate role within the CCR. As soon as the news broke about the virus I even had an email from Laura Carter to check in and check I was ok. Little things like that mean a lot!” he added.

Like many other organisations, the South Wales Chamber of Commerce found that home working kit required a bit more than a laptop, and some members of the team had to have printers and other hardware delivered to their homes.

**Jo Price, Director of International at South Wales Chamber of Commerce, said:**

“ We had started preparing for lockdown well in advance of March 23 as, from observing what was happening with our international connections, it was obvious it was only a matter of time before the UK followed suit. Our planning and preparation for moving to a virtual platform even involved us trial home working on a two in the office, one at home rota until we were all confidently able to access everything we needed to be able to work remotely effectively.

With demand for hand sanitisers surging overnight, the South Wales Chamber of Commerce found itself helping source dispensers.

“ We were able to step in and play a key role in facilitating the sourcing of UK-based bottle suppliers. This is the type of thing we increasingly find ourselves doing, and it enables us to add real value to our members in what is an extremely challenging trading environment,” Jo said.

She said the Chamber's management team was committed to maintaining a high level of personal contact with its teams.

“ Communication has never been more essential and we are all doing the most we can to make everyone feel involved, informed and inspired. We are all really proud of how well the whole team has embraced the situation and risen to the challenges presented,” she added.

If you are evaluating your capacity and need any further resource to manage at this time, the **Cardiff Capital Region Graduate Scheme** may be able to help. The Scheme can provide a free and streamlined recruitment service that can match your immediate resourcing needs to high-skilled graduate talent in the region.

If you are interested in finding out more please get in touch with either [laura.carter@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:laura.carter@cardiff.gov.uk) or [Geraldine.OSullivan@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:Geraldine.OSullivan@cardiff.gov.uk).





# Training in the Age of Covid-19: Interview with Andrew Cooksley



Parents and children will remember the spring of 2020 as the spring the schools were

shut. For many children it's been like a three-month holiday; the realisation of that cherished fantasy, what if there were no school? For parents it's been as much ordeal as pleasure; struggling to keep children entertained while working from home, and anxious about the impact on their education and future prospects.

Those concerns have been particularly acute for parents whose children were facing important GCSE and A level exams. Education authorities and exam boards moved quickly to put in place plans for students to be marked according to estimated grades, but there were still concerns about whether those grades would accurately reflect what the students might have achieved in normal circumstances.

At least there was a simple solution to marking GCSE and A level students. For those thousands of learners taking vocational qualifications or going through apprenticeships, it's not so easy. It's arguably not a big problem if someone goes to study for a history degree at university on the basis of estimated grades, but would you want someone fixing your boiler who has never been watched doing it before?

This is the problem faced by FE colleges and apprenticeship providers across Wales. Andrew Cooksley is founder and CEO of Cardiff-based learning provider ACT, which is Wales' largest provider of apprenticeships and among the top five in the UK. Together with its partners it delivers around 8,000 apprenticeships across Wales every year.

“ Andrew said “Qualifications Wales and the awarding bodies are working closely with training providers and issuing new guidance on calculated results and adaptations to assessment methods where possible to allow learners to progress in or complete their qualifications.

Generally, if you're going to say that someone can build a wall, you're going to have to observe them doing it and question them and see their knowledge and understanding of that,” he said.

Learners are still able to develop technical knowledge and theory, a vital part of their training, whilst we continue to work through how some of the practical elements can be assessed”

Fortunately, this is only an issue for some trades; for many people doing apprenticeships or other vocational qualifications there's less need for practical assessments, or an easy way around it.

“ The majority of our learners we can probably assess online, that's what we're working towards,” said Andrew.

Someone doing childcare, for instance; it's not all about doing things in a practical way, it's their knowledge and understanding about how to look after and develop a child. Large parts of their qualifications are knowledge and theory based which can easily be taught, assessed and proven through online training and assessment.”

All ACT's 8,000 apprentice learners are, by definition, employed, and for many the lockdown has been unexpectedly beneficial for their training. Unable to go to work, they have had more time to devote to their studies, and many are ahead of where they would expect to be at this stage.

“ Our engagement rate is through the roof at the moment,” said Andrew.

Normally people are busy at work and it's hard for them to find the time to complete a piece of work or do an assessment. The lockdown has allowed people loads of time to complete their work.”

He added: “A large part of the learning we deliver is in clinical health and social care and despite them being flat out in work, doing an incredible job for patients and residents, many are still engaging in their training online and we are even seeing new learners signing up to these programmes”.

This is the case for many of our other apprentices, they're really engaged, completing work, ahead of their qualifications.”

As with most businesses, ACT and its partners had to adapt very quickly to new ways of working when the country went into lockdown on March 23. Practically overnight, classroom and workplace training sessions had to be replaced by online tutorials, and staff meetings gave way to Zoom and Teams chats.

**Andrew said it's been a wake-up call for the training and education sector.**

“ If you took a photo of an operating theatre in 1880 and one now, probably the only common thing would be the patient lying on the operating table, otherwise it would be pretty unrecognisable. But if you took a photo of a classroom in 1880 and one now, there'd not be much difference. Everyone is facing the front, no-one's collaborating.

A lecture theatre now still looks like a lecture theatre did then,” he said.

All of a sudden, within three months, there's none of that going on, but there's been plenty of teaching and tutoring and knowledge transfer. All these things you need to do to have a good learning environment has gone on without anybody thinking, where are the classrooms, why aren't we sitting around a table facing the front?”

He added that the lockdown had forced the education and training sector to take the first few steps to modernising itself.

“ Since I've been involved in it, which is all my adult life, there's been this talk: how can we do things differently, how can we be innovative? Everyone's talked but no-one's broken out of the old pattern. All of a sudden we've had to do it, and I don't think it will be the same after this.

Do we really need people to come in to deliver learning all the time? So I think it's going to be really interesting.”

So with all the difficulties of adjustment, there is opportunity too. Wales' training sector, of which ACT is a leading example, has proved itself innovative, flexible, adaptable and resilient. There is still much to do in ensuring learners can complete their courses and apprenticeships, and pass on fully qualified into the world of work.

But businesses and organisations like ACT are already looking ahead to how they will function in the new economy that will emerge when Wales recovers from the downturn. It will be a different world to the one we have left behind us, but there are reasons to hope it may be a better one.





To apply for a business support grant through your council, follow the relevant link below:

**Blaenau Gwent CBC Business Hub**

<https://www.blaenauwentbusinesshub.co.uk/BusinessSupport/Covid-19>

**Bridgend**

<https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/my-council/council-priorities-and-performance/coronavirus-covid-19-latest-information-and-advice/apply-for-welsh-government-business-support/>

**Caerphilly**

<https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/Business/Business-rates/Covid-19-Grants-Linked-to-Business-Rates>

**Cardiff**

<https://www.cardiff.gov.uk/ENG/Business/Business-Rates/Covid-grant/Pages/default.aspx>

**Merthyr**

<https://www.merthyr.gov.uk/business/business-rates/business-rates-relief-coronavirus-covid-19/>

**Monmouthshire**

<https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/business-advice/>

**Newport**

<http://www.newport.gov.uk/en/Business/Business-home-page.aspx>

**Rhondda Cynon**

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/EmergenciesSafetyandCrime/InformationforResidentsCoronavirus/SupportandAdviceforBusinesses.aspx>

**Torfaen**

<https://www.torfaen.gov.uk/en/AboutTheCouncil/Homepage-Stories/Coronavirus/Business-Economy/Business-Economy.aspx>

**Vale of Glamorgan**

<https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/working/Business-Support/Coronavirus-Advice-for-Business.aspx>



## Cardiff Capital Region Firms Urged to Apply for COVID-19 Business Grants

Qualifying firms that are registered to pay business rates in Wales are being reminded that there's still time to apply for a Welsh Government non repayable grant worth £25,000 or £10,000 if they haven't done so already.

These grants have been introduced to support businesses in Wales through the Coronavirus pandemic and could make all the difference to a business at this unprecedented time.

**Delivered via local authorities, the two grants are :**

**Grant 1:** a grant of £25,000 for retail, leisure and hospitality businesses (e.g. shops, restaurants, cafes, drinking establishments, cinemas, live music venues, hotels, guest and boarding premises and self-catering accommodation) occupying properties with a rateable value of between £12,001 and £51,000.

**Grant 2:** a £10,000 grant to all businesses (including qualifying charity run shops, sports premises and community centres) eligible for small business rates relief (SBRR) in Wales with a rateable value of £12,000 or less.

Both grants will apply to businesses that were on the rating list on 20 March, 2020.

To find out more about how qualifying businesses can access a grant, businesses should visit their relevant local authority's website.



**JANE MUDD**

**THE SPIRIT OF COLLABORATION  
WILL BE A POSITIVE LEGACY OF  
CORONAVIRUS**



# The Spirit of Collaboration will be a Positive Legacy of Coronavirus



As the leader of Newport City Council I have been amazed by the extraordinary effort people and businesses in our city and region have put into helping our community throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

**Jane Mudd**

Leader Newport City Council, and member of CCR Regional Cabinet

Newport and Gwent were one of the worst affected areas in terms of hospital admissions at one stage during the pandemic. However, people in the public sector, in businesses, and in charities and third sector organisations, all rallied around to do what they could to help people in our communities, both those personally affected by the virus and those impacted by the lockdown.

We have seen some remarkable examples of adaptability, a truly astonishing ability to change long established habits and practices to meet the urgent needs of a crisis. In my own local authority, we switched incredibly quickly wherever possible to remote ways of working, keeping to a minimum any interruption to the vital services we provide.

## Our support for business

As an authority one of the many important tasks we have had to perform during this crisis is to support businesses, helping them to access the financial support that has been made available to them by both the Welsh and UK governments, including the business rates relief which we, like other local authorities, have been administering. Like our

partner local authorities in the Cardiff Capital Region, we have acted as a conduit for advice and support that higher levels of government have provided.

Many of our businesses have had to suspend their operations during the lockdown, and we obviously have concerns for them and hope that they will be able to resume their activities as soon as it is safe for them to do so, with all the appropriate social distancing and other health precautions in place. At present, to help accelerate this, we are supporting wherever we can the opening up of sectors such as construction and housing, both of which will have a significant multiplier effect on the local economy supply chains.

Some businesses, because of the nature of their work, have been able to switch to making essential and much needed products. Newport-based Tiny Rebel, for example, while pubs have been closed, has converted its brewery to making hand sanitiser which it has donated to the health and social care services.

## Changing the way we travel

One of the most noticeable effects of the lockdown in a city like Newport has been the absence of cars from our roads. Not only in the city centre has this had an impact, but also on the M4, where Newport forms part of the main corridor of travel between England in one direction and West Wales in the other.

Many people have commented on the improvement in air quality during the lockdown, and as we come out of it we need to think about how we can get people moving again without encouraging them all to get back into their private cars, conscious of course of any concerns that people may have about using public transport. We are working with Welsh Government on both Active Travel and Sustainable Travel initiatives.

Newport Council is a shareholder of the city's bus company, which has seen its revenues plummet as services have been suspended during the pandemic. We are working in partnership with Welsh Government, Transport for Wales and Newport Bus on a pilot project that will allow people to request a bus to pick them up for essential travel.



Newport Bus is running the first pilot scheme, called 'fflecsi', which replaces a number of scheduled local bus services with more flexible services that can pick up and drop off near work, shops and homes by request, rather than following a set timetable at fixed bus stops. Customers are able to book a ride using a mobile phone app. As an added advantage, the buses are electric, helping to maintain the air quality improvement we've seen in this lockdown.

## A new sense of community

This is a time of tragedy for many, and of hardship and heartache for many more. In such times it can be hard to talk about positives. But there are things we can be proud of, as communities and as a region.

The pandemic has seen an outpouring of community feeling such as we haven't seen for many years. It has also seen a high level of collaboration, between businesses, the public sector and third sector organisations, and between authorities across Cardiff Capital Region.

**“ This, I hope, is one of the legacies of this experience. Cardiff Capital Region was built around a core belief in the value of collaboration, and in this crisis we have proved that our strength as a region lies in our desire and ability to work together to achieve common goals.**

**Let this be the memory that we take away from 2020.**

# CCR Cabinet Agrees New Investments to Aid Covid-19 Recovery

The Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown has knocked the world's economy out of shape, and with it many of our previous calculations and expectations about what investments would be needed and what funding would be available over the next five to 10 years.

Here in Cardiff Capital Region we're not exempt from the economic fallout of the pandemic, and have to face the prospect of a severe and possibly prolonged recession. Recovery may come quickly or it may take a little longer; either way we need to be ready to help our businesses and communities make the most of it.

Before Covid-19, Cardiff Capital Region was concerned to boost and direct investment into key sectors, to help the region overcome its poor inequalities and its underperformance compared to other parts of the UK.

The aim of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal has always been to make the region more connected, competitive, and resilient, and to address the social and geographical inequalities within it. As the region emerges from slump into recovery, this aim has become more important than ever.



## An evergreen fund for strategic premises

It was in this spirit that the Regional Cabinet recently reviewed its investment plans, which had last been assessed shortly before the lockdown happened in early March. In a Teams meeting on May 18, the Cabinet reaffirmed some of the decisions it had already made, and agreed to some other ones in the hope they will be a further spur to recovery.

The most significant recommendation is for a Strategic Premises Fund, of possibly up to £50m, which is intended to support otherwise viable industrial development projects where there is evidence of market failure affecting financial viability. The hope is that this will help bring forward schemes that otherwise might struggle to progress without this type of strategic support because they cannot get all the funding they need in the current environment.

There will be particular emphasis on projects that support innovation and job creation and make use of brownfield sites to create Grade A or equivalent space, and the fund will also aim to leverage private sector investment.

It will be an evergreen fund, with payouts in the form of fully repayable loans, so that it can continue to plough back returned investments into new schemes in the future. The Regional Cabinet has agreed to spend £45,000 on developing an outline business case for the fund over the summer.

## A suite of proposals to help the region

The Cabinet also agreed a number of other proposals, while rejecting some which it felt did not meet the Capital Region's core objectives. One proposal was for seed support for a fintech trade body, to underpin the development of a Cardiff HQ and satellite outlets in Bridgend and Cwmbran. The Cabinet agreed this should proceed to a strategic outline case.

The Cabinet also called for the bringing forward of a business case on the Building Local Wealth Challenge Fund, designed to support SMEs and the foundational economy.

Another proposal has come from an established company which wants to spin out a new AI/data product based on an already existing one. The Regional Cabinet followed the advice of the Capital Region's Investment Panel that this should proceed to the next stage, on the basis that the proposers have strong credentials and that any investment would be securitised against the parent company.

These latest decisions, on which there will be more information in the coming weeks come in addition to ones taken in March, when the Regional Cabinet agreed to fund a £45m Housing Investment Fund, the scaling up of the CCR Graduate Scheme, design work and technical specifications for Metro Central, a Life Sciences Park at Junction 32 of the M4, fibre provision and the roll-out of 5G.

Altogether, the package of approved investments adds up to an ambitious programme of support for innovation, resilience and connectivity in the Capital Region; and comes amid a recognition that, in a time of crisis, the region must do whatever it can to help its people, businesses and communities to not just survive the crisis but to emerge stronger and better equipped to prosper in the new world.



# Graduates Making Their Mark in CCR Businesses: Megan Gray at MagManager

In the latest in our series of articles looking at how Cardiff Capital Region graduates and businesses are benefiting from the CCR Graduate Scheme, we look at Megan Gray at MagManager.

Recent graduate Megan Gray started working as a client relationship manager for Monmouth-based CRM/publishing systems provider MagManager last October, so she'd had nearly six months to settle in to her new job before the lockdown sent everyone home.

The company's clients are mostly independent magazine publishers, who use its software to plan out their titles and manage their business. Coronavirus meant a lot of them having to replan their titles, and also suffering from falls in advertising revenues and hence problems with cashflow.

The result has been a heavier workload for MagManager, as Megan explained:

“ It's got a lot busier since the coronavirus hit us. We are now having to do much more work for our clients and we understand many of their businesses are now suffering, so we try to go above and beyond for them now just to make things that little bit easier.

Megan said that MagManager had organised the shift to home working very efficiently.

“ As a client relationship manager I spend a lot of time on the phone, so I actually find working from home easy. We have Skype meetings every morning which sets out the plan for my day, and they trust in me

to get on with things then which is great despite being relatively new to the company,” she said.

The biggest struggle I sometimes have with the home working is knowing when to stop. There's that temptation to keep on going, but if you do, it can be a very long working day. So I have to force myself to detach sometimes, but the management are brilliant at reinforcing this as well.”

I do miss the office environment though, as I think it's a much bigger support network when you are all together. So I am very much looking forward to the time when we can all be together again.”

MagManager founder and director Mandy Mardell said the company was doing all it can to keep in regular contact with staff and ensure they don't feel isolated.

“ We do miss the day to day interactions; we compensate as best we can with daily 1-2-1s to ensure everyone understands what to do and how to do it, and just generally to check in with each other and see how we're all feeling,” she said.

This just happens naturally when you're sat next to each other all day, and it is harder over the phone, but it's so essential for morale and engagement so we all commit to it and put effort into staying in touch.”

Mandy paid tribute to Megan and a fellow graduate who had also joined the company under the CCR Graduate Scheme.

“ Both our graduate appointments Meg and Amber have been fabulous. They have taken the adjustments within their stride and are doing a great job of keeping things going. I am proud of the way they have adapted to the new routines and ways of working. They add real value to our business and have proved to be great appointments,” she said.

Megan said she really enjoys her job and hopes to stay in the industry. She said:

“ I love the publishing business, and the writing side of the job in particular is something I am passionate about. I enjoy creating content and then putting it out there for others to read.

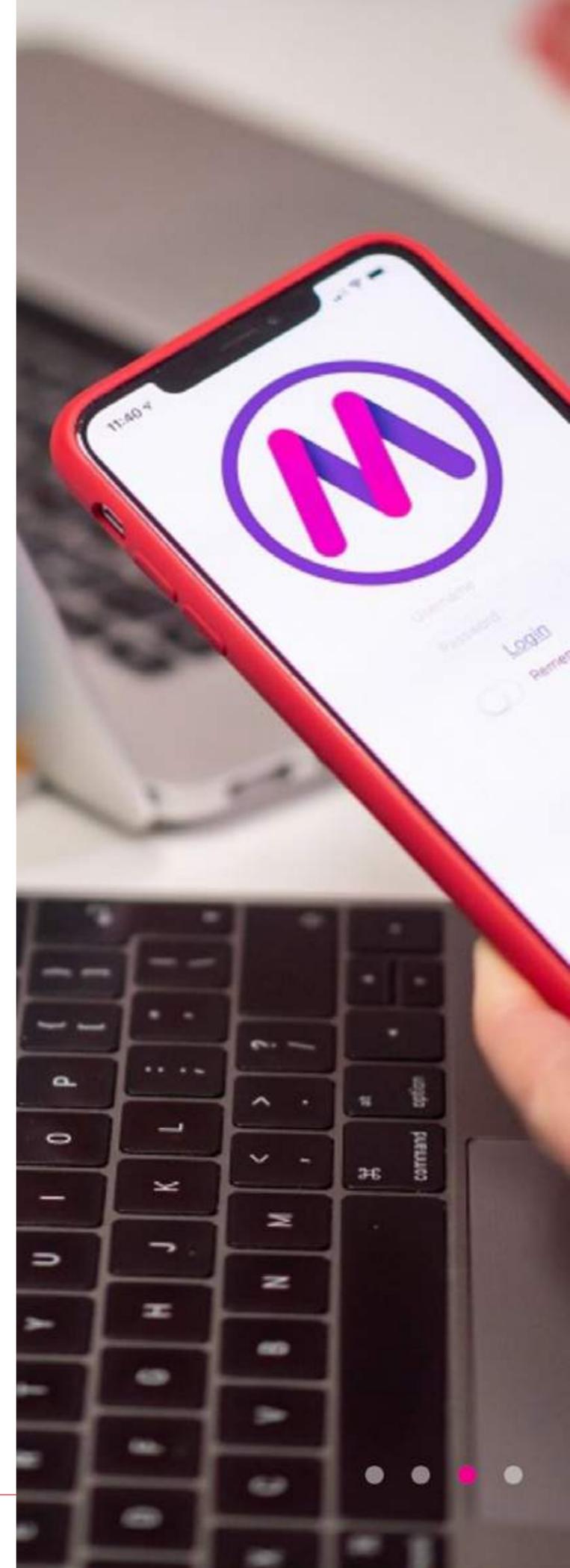
I also like the fact there's a range of things to get involved in with this job. I'm currently doing some video content for the website which I find fun, I'll also be doing content in the next few days so there's plenty of variation and you never get bored.”

And she had praise for the CCR Graduate Scheme.

“ I think the scheme is excellent and I would advocate it to anyone. I feel really fortunate to have been accepted onto it,” she said.

If you are evaluating your capacity and need any further resource to manage at this time, the **Cardiff Capital Region Graduate Scheme** may be able to help. The Scheme can provide a free and streamlined recruitment service that can match your immediate resourcing needs to high-skilled graduate talent in the region.

If you are interested in finding out more please get in touch with either [laura.carter@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:laura.carter@cardiff.gov.uk) or [Geraldine.OSullivan@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:Geraldine.OSullivan@cardiff.gov.uk).



# Industrial Past Meets Sustainable Future in New Barry Development

A new urban high street will open in Barry this summer, incorporating an iconic part of the seaside town's 19th century railway heritage.

Goodsheds is an innovative development located opposite the Pumthouse in Barry. It features a former railway engine shed along with new units made from shipping containers. Together they create a setting that combines industrial heritage with 21st century design.

The scheme is the work of award winning Cardiff-based property developer Loft Co, working in collaboration with the Welsh Government and Vale of Glamorgan Council. Last week it was announced that the project had secured a £2.9 loan investment from the Development Bank of Wales.

Loft Co specialises in regenerating historic buildings and landmarks and turning them into mixed use developments. Its previous successful developments include the Tramshed in Cardiff, the Pumthouse in Barry, and Jennings Building in Porthcawl.

Goodsheds is intended to be an all-inclusive 24/7 scheme, that will allow the community in Barry and the Vale to live, work and play all in one sustainable environment. Carbon neutrality is a key philosophy in the development, made manifest in the restoration of the engine shed and the use of shipping containers as the framework for the new building.



On the ground floor of the older building there is an office, restaurant and bottle shop or bar, while the first floor has 11 serviced apartments.

The new building has four floors. On the ground floor is a bakery, an ice cream shop, two retail units and six food units. On the first floor there's a mixture of retail and lifestyle units, including a hair stylist, beauty salon and women's clothes store. The second floor has more office units, while the third floor has a rooftop bar and terrace and another retail or office unit.

To reinforce the link with the railway past, there will even be railway carriages on the tracks that are still there on the site. The carriages, known as The Makers, will contain yet further retail units, such as a butcher, greengrocer and florist, as well as a mini cinema and arts and crafts units for community classes.

Every unit in the development has been let on favourable lease terms to encourage local businesses. The £9m scheme is expected to create 150 jobs and become home to 25 businesses, with more local businesses benefiting in the supply chain. Altogether Goodsheds is expected to add £30m to the local economy over the next five years.

**Simon Baston, CEO of Loft Co, said:**

“High Streets are re-establishing themselves. It's all about the experience and, with the help of the Development Bank of Wales, we're working hard to rejuvenate local high streets and communities in some great locations so that they can become destinations in their own right.”

He added:

“The social and economic impact of our work is far-reaching. This isn't just about creating jobs, it's about reconnecting people with what matters to them by bringing a new life and sense of purpose to buildings that were once at the heart of the local community.”

# The Three CCR Businesses that have Won Queen's Awards

Three companies in Cardiff Capital Region have won Queen's Awards for Enterprise. The awards, which have been presented annually since 1966, recognise outstanding achievement in innovation, international trade, sustainable development and promoting opportunity.

The three were among eight in Wales and 220 around the UK to win awards this year.

SPTS Technologies was the only Welsh winner in the Innovation category. The Newport based firm is a previous Queen's Award winner, having previously won an innovation award in 2018 and international trade awards in 2013 and 2017.

SPTS supplies advanced wafer processing equipment to the world's leading semiconductor and microelectronic device manufacturers. This latest award has been given for the company's development of a new method of dicing silicon wafers using plasma cutting techniques. This avoids damaging dies, and produces stronger, more reliable devices and a higher volume throughput than was possible before.

The firm is already winning around 50% market share with this new technology, and gaining new customers in new sectors.

Wales Interactive was one of four Welsh companies to win an international trade award. The Bridgend based firm, set up in 2012, is a multi-award winning developer and publisher of video games and interactive independent movies. Through partnerships with third party developers they have brought their games to PC, PlayStation and Xbox One, as well as download stores such as Steam, Nintendo Store and Windows Store.

Exports make up 94% of all sales and overseas sales have grown 503% over the last three years, with the principal markets being China, the USA, Germany, South Korea and Russia.

## The company said in a statement:

*"The Wales Interactive team are extremely honoured to have won a Queen's Award 2020. It is a fantastic achievement for our studio and highlights all the hard work we have put in over the last few years. We are proud to be flying the flag for Wales internationally and delighted to be recognised for creating video games and interactive movie titles that entertain the world."*

The third business from the region to win an award was St Athan based Dresd, which won in the sustainable development category. The company reclaims and reuses film and TV sets, for example on BBC Atlantis, when it reduced waste to landfill by 96% and cutting clearance costs by 50%.

The company's customers include Bafta, British Airways, Comic Relief, Stella McCartney and Vogue, and to date it has diverted more than 116,000 tonnes of material from landfill.

Founding director Lynn McFarlane spent months studying the film and TV industry, on top of her years of experience in event builds, to develop her ideas for bringing more sustainable practices to the sector.

Working with major producers such as NBC Universal and Sony Pictures, along with outfits, Dresd proved changes could be made to the way productions are planned and wrapped up. The company has gone on to work with hundreds of designers and set builders, setting up the first film and TV salvage centre of its kind, where it keeps a large bank of sets and stock for reuse and hire.

## Lynn McFarlane said:

*"We are proud to have been recognised for our unique contribution to the film/TV and event industry, that demonstrates a new innovative direction for sustainability for the future of the creative industries."*



**PETER FOX**

**A BRILLIANT EFFORT,  
AND NOW IT'S TIME TO  
THINK AHEAD**

# A Brilliant Effort, and Now it's Time to Think Ahead



Individuals, families, communities, and businesses have been turned upside down virtually overnight. The way we live, communicate and do business has had to change at such a pace it's left us feeling we are living in a parallel universe; a surreal existence so alien to what our world was like only a few weeks ago.

**Peter Fox**

Leader Monmouthshire County Council and Vice Chair CCR Regional cabinet

The threats from Covid-19 demanded we act fast to save lives, and the British people responded and batted down the hatches, and demonstrated a coming together in a national effort not experienced since World War 2.

Our Government stepped up and gave the leadership we needed more than ever, despite what many armchair scientists declare. The Chancellor's support packages have been huge, and have supported and will support thousands of businesses of all descriptions. Welsh Government has stepped up also and added additional support through its Economic Resilience Fund.

We have seen over £4bn flow into Wales to deal with the pandemic; £2.2bn through Barnett consequential funding and the rest through the various support packages. But despite this unprecedented level of support, many businesses sadly have fallen between the cracks, and our hearts go out to them. Even large global players are being rocked by events – events that have spanned the world leaving few communities unscathed.

## A strong team

We are blessed in Monmouthshire with a fantastic team of public servants, who I am very proud of. Coronavirus came on the back of last winter's flooding, which was a very challenging situation that the staff had to rise to, and then they had to deal with the coronavirus. We had to close many of our services, but we worked very hard to get money out to the businesses who needed it as quickly as possible.

It was a brilliant effort on the part of our teams who have been engaging with businesses throughout. We've also seen a tremendous community spirit throughout Monmouthshire, with businesses, charities, volunteers and public servants all working very hard to get help out to the vulnerable people who needed it.

Our priority, as we move from emergency to recovery, is clear, transparent communication. We've had a huge amount of positive feedback from businesses and individuals, but there'll be further challenges in the following weeks for us and the wider public service. Here in Monmouthshire we're on the border with England where many regulations in regard to the lockdown are now different.

Unsurprisingly, people's tolerance is starting to get frayed.

## Opportunity in adversity

But now is a time for forward thinking and new ambition. It's a time to take stock, to put our heads up and learn quickly from the situation.

As we move through the pandemic and restrictions are eased, we will see the seeds of recovery. Whilst we may be in one of the deepest recessions experienced in the last 100 years or more, I truly believe we will recover, in time, stronger than ever before.

Out of adversity opportunities will always manifest themselves, and that new future will emerge. There will be new needs, expectations and aspirations. The Capital Region and its investment funds will be fundamental to supporting, influencing and helping to power the Welsh economy.

It is highly unlikely that we will see the UK economy simply 'snap back'. But equally, we must try and strike a balance in the region; avoiding knee-jerk reactions, focussing on our 20-year outlook and working in real-time, adapting to the shifting position. Our Industrial and Economic Growth Plan is sound, with its focus on sectors and building clusters around medtech, compound semi-conductors, data/AI, infrastructure, fin-tech and energy – which if anything must now be accelerated.

## Our 10 priorities

Cardiff Capital Region is an exciting place to be in as we emerge from the UK's currently strangled economy. The CCR Cabinet has set 10 priorities to set our focus on. These priorities spread across the 5 horizons companies will need to think and act across as they rebound from the pandemic; Resolve, Resilience, Return, Reimagine and Reform.

Our priorities include things like building an intelligence base for businesses and helping them navigate their options and opportunities; preparing for what comes next; and looking at our existing programmes to see whether they need to be altered to fit the new conditions.

They will include developing new, targeted funding interventions and new investment application support mechanisms including an SME Co-investment Fund, and Investment Readiness programmes.

Also a priority will be the creation of a new Challenge Fund Programme to rebuild local wealth; alongside an open call for innovation in medtech.

Finally, to increase our overall competitiveness and wealth creation as a region, we must move forward with support programmes for industrial scale priority clusters, and provide support mechanisms to enhance the performance of our medium-sized businesses.

## Many cups waiting to be filled

We will be here, ready to help businesses get back up and embrace innovation, technologies and new ways of working.

In these extraordinary times, we will be setting the scene to start thinking about things in a different way, like how we travel, and how do we do things on a more local level. How do we alter the layout of our town centres to allow businesses to expand into the streets at night to cope with social distancing?

At a time when many will see their cups looking at best half full or even near empty, I see Cardiff Capital Region as a place with many cups just waiting to be filled with a whole variety of new flavours, together with all the well-known favourites.



# Cardiff Capital Region's Regional Cabinet has set out its 10 priorities for the region in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Cabinet, which includes the leaders of the 10 local authorities that make up the CCR, has reassessed the needs of the regional economy as the country comes out of lockdown and heads into recovery.

The 10 priorities come as an addendum to the CCR's Industrial and Economic Plan, which was drawn up in early 2019 by the Regional Cabinet together with the CCR's Economic Growth Partnership, which includes leading figures from the worlds of business, the public sector and academia.

The plan was always intended to be flexible so that it could be adapted to the changing needs of the regional economy over its 20-year lifespan. The pandemic has meant an early reassessment to make sure it still meets the needs of the region.

## Strategic Response

After consulting with the Economic Growth Partnership and other stakeholders, the Regional Cabinet endorsed five recommendations for its Strategic Response to the pandemic. These recommendations are to:

1. Avoid the crowded, immediate funding response space, to make sure that any interventions complement and do not duplicate existing business support packages.
2. Adhere to the original strategic plan and its focus on industries of the future, but accelerate efforts to build clusters around medtech, data/AI, compound semiconductors, infrastructure, fintech and energy, balancing this with an approach to building local wealth.
3. Revisit, adjust and adapt current investment programmes to make sure they are still fit for purpose.
4. Leverage other funding sources and swiftly deploy, relevant financial tools and solutions where there is a proven viable company or proposal in order to increase business resilience and facilitate growth.
5. Establish a new Re-building Local Economies Challenge Programme.

## The 10 priorities

In addition to these five recommendations, the Regional Cabinet has set out 10 priorities to focus on as part of a phased approach to coping with and moving beyond the pandemic and its economic impact.

Under the first phase, **Reaction**, the priorities are:

1. Helping CCR businesses navigate the funding support packages available and identifying gaps in provision. This includes communicating information, getting feedback, and raising awareness of arising issues.
2. Building a strong evidence base to enable ongoing assessment of regional economic health. This includes working with the School of Economic Geography at Cardiff University to create a regional data dashboard of Key Performance Indicators, and getting feedback from stakeholders to identify issues and opportunities.
3. Reviewing current City Deal initiatives to make sure they align with CCR economic and social imperatives in a post-Covid 19 world. This will include accelerating our Digital Infrastructure programmes on full fibre connectivity and 5G and considering the application of a broader reskilling/ HE/ FE support programme to mirror the changing sector dynamics.
4. Ensuring entrepreneurs and start-ups get the support they need. This includes facilitating access to mentoring programmes and network groups, unlocking routes to obtain seed capital and influencing the potential creation of a bespoke shared prosperity funding programme.
5. Setting up a new Rebuilding Local Economies Challenge Programme, to capitalise on the business innovation and ingenuity seen during the crisis. Two or three challenges such as healthy ageing, foundational economy renewal, future mobility or decarbonisation, will form the focus for the new challenge funds.

In the second phase, **Adaptation**, the priorities are:

6. Developing new, targeted funding interventions and new investment application

support mechanisms. This includes working with investment partners to create an SME Co-investment Fund to help scale up business in priority sectors

7. Supporting key businesses in the CCR priority clusters to increase their resilience and capacity for growth through increased flexibility on lending/investments. This includes consideration of alternative funding mechanisms such as convertible equities, greater flexibility in ways of assessing debt capacity, and increased use of guarantees and asset-backed securities.
8. Accelerating the development of our medtech cluster through encouraging and supporting investment opportunities in medtech innovation. This will allow us to build upon the strategic opportunities for the sector and the region presented by the scale of businesses diversifying their manufacturing bases to accommodate the production of medical tools and equipment.
9. Expediting the creation of resilient industrial clusters with thriving regional ecosystems. This includes creating formal cluster bodies in priority sectors, and prioritising investment support to complement strategic cluster company inward investment activities.
10. Increasing our overall competitiveness and wealth creation as a region by improving the financial performance of medium-sized businesses. This will include focused interventions such as facilitating greater networking opportunities between CEOs, for the sharing of best practice advice and guidance.

**Anthony Hunt, Chair of the Cardiff Capital Region Cabinet, said:**

“Individuals, businesses and communities in the Cardiff Capital Region have worked extremely hard and made major sacrifices to help curb the spread of Covid-19, support our health and care services, and keep their businesses afloat.

The Regional Cabinet appreciates the extraordinary effort everyone has made, and is determined to make sure that in the

recovery ahead our region emerges stronger, more competitive, better connected and more resilient than before.

These 10 priorities – which, taking the Challenge fund for example, involve new ways of solving intractable programmes – will help ensure that we focus our collective efforts on the things that will have the greatest impact.”

**Kellie Beirne, Director Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, said:**

“ Covid-19 has challenged us all, and people, businesses and communities across our region have faced up to these challenges with determination and resolve. The months and years ahead will present us with fresh challenges as we come out of the lockdown and start to rebuild our economy.

The economic plan and investment priorities we had already set out before this pandemic were designed to make our region better connected, more competitive and more resilient, and to make sure the full benefits of the City Deal were felt in all our communities across the region. We have taken another look at our plans and determined that the priority sectors we had identified for support are the ones that will best help our region prosper in the new economic landscape that will emerge in the wake of the pandemic.

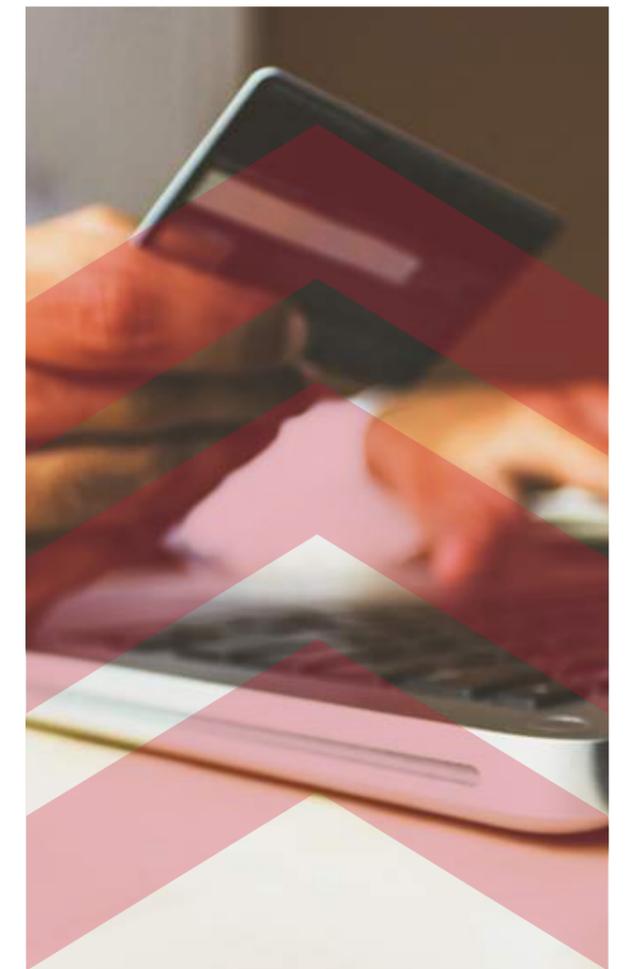
The 10 priorities we have set out represent where we think we can most usefully support our businesses and communities and will enable us to create a positive legacy. By taking a new approach and not simply carrying on with the old ways of doing things, we believe we can help our businesses and communities move beyond the impact of the pandemic and emerge stronger and better able to face the future with confidence.”

**Frank Holmes, Chair of the Cardiff Capital Region Economic Growth Partnership, said:**

“ We have seen the power of collaboration and how delivery should be best left to the experts, whether in healthcare, finance or public service.

As physical doors close, digital doors swing open. It is critical to reconstruct for the future and not dwell on solving the problems of the past.

The next normal is in the hands of countless decision makers and could result in a burst of innovation and productivity, more resilient industries, smarter government at all levels and a reconnected world; or slower growth, less prosperity, bloated government and widening inequality with rigid borders.”





## Wagonex Leads the Way in Kick-Starting the Automotive Sector

**Covid-19 has been devastating for the automotive sector, with UK new car sales in April dropping to figures not seen since 1946. Just 871 cars were sold to retail customers during the month, the remaining 3,500 going to fleet and business buyers.**

With car showrooms shut during the month and people restricted to essential travel only, these figures are hardly surprising. The sector is hoping for a rapid recovery once showrooms reopen. There is a fear, though, that with recession looming, people will be reluctant to commit to buying a car, just as they were after the 2008 recession.

One Cardiff-based software company, however, is offering a solution that could be a lifeline for car dealerships. Instead of the traditional models of car ownership or long-term leases, Wagonex provides a car subscription service, with lengths of contract running from as little as a month to up to two years.

Customers can take out a subscription online, and have a wide range of vehicles and subscription options to choose from. It's a very flexible service too, with customers able to change their cars and alter the length of their subscription. The fee includes insurance, and cars are delivered to the customer's door.

### Birth of the concept

Wagonex's subscription concept was created before the pandemic by a company of creative and innovative young thinkers, who questioned why it was necessary to take on the financial commitment of ownership or a long lease to have a car. But the idea could prove more popular now with a wider driving public, in the current climate of financial uncertainty and nervousness about using public transport.

Recognising the anxieties of the moment, Wagonex is offering its online subscription service free to dealerships and manufacturers for three months, in the hope that it will boost business for the troubled sector. Not only could this add another dimension to the service dealerships provide, by allowing customers to buy subscriptions online it could also help overcome issues around social distancing.

It's certain the next few months will prove challenging for the automotive sector. By helping car dealerships and manufacturers provide an alternative, flexible and easy to use service to customers, and one which reduces their worries about taking on large financial commitments, Wagonex could just save their businesses.

Toby Kernon, CEO and Founder of Wagonex, said:

*“ We're looking forward to working with businesses across the country and helping to get their vehicles up and running. We're doing everything that we can to help businesses to get back on their feet by offering this support.”*

Nathaniel Cars said:

*“ The initiative is absolutely fantastic. Having an additional product which sits between renting and owning, and offers our customers complete flexibility, is exactly what the industry has been looking for.”*



**CARA AITCHISON**

**CARDIFF MET'S STAFF AND STUDENTS STAND READY TO HELP WALES IN THE RECOVERY**



# Cardiff Met's Staff and Students Stand Ready to Help Wales in the Recovery

As spring turns to summer and we look forward to the progressive lifting of restrictions on our personal and working lives, we at Cardiff Metropolitan University are optimistic about our ability to recover from the effects of the pandemic.



**Professor Cara Aitchison**  
President and Vice-Chancellor of Cardiff Metropolitan University and Board member of the CCR Economic Growth Partnership

We started planning our response early, took advantage of our strong financial position, put our students first and helped the wider community as much as we could.

### Taking action early

We were proactive as a university in our response to the crisis. We set up a Covid-19 Planning and Response Group back in January. We describe our University as being 'values-led' and we have a strong health and wellbeing ethos, so we tried to tackle the Coronavirus crisis from that perspective from the outset, thinking about how we would ensure that our staff and students were best served to enable them to bounce back strongly when the time came.

We moved all learning, teaching and student support online and also provided a lot of online support for staff in the form of individual check-ups, team meetings and a new Weekly Update in

the form of a newsletter that has had excellent engagement from staff across the University. The crisis has galvanised the staff and, paradoxically, we've probably got higher staff morale now than at any time I can remember since I joined the university four years ago.

### Surviving the financial challenge

We did a lot of work three years ago to rebalance our finances and, although actions such as losing over 10% of the University's staff to voluntary severance in 2017 were painful for all of us, it is those actions that have put us in a strong financial position to be able to withstand this turn of events. We also embarked three years ago on a growth programme: we've increased turnover from under £100m when I joined to £108m last year; we've increased student numbers by diversifying into new programme areas and we have further new programmes starting in September, including

degrees in Policing, in Law and in Architecture; and we've improved quality, as recorded through measures like the National Student Survey.

We were the first university in Wales to say we would not charge students for their residential accommodation in the summer term. That meant we've lost a major income stream for this term in the residency fees, and we've also lost all the catering income, the conference income, and income from summer schools and short courses.

This term that amounts to £4m, which is almost 4% of our annual turnover. We can withstand that because our budgets for this year were all on track and we were due to make a fairly significant surplus, which we had earmarked for investment into capital spending.

The whole sector is anticipating a significant downturn in international students in the next academic year. For us, that's mitigated in two ways. One is that we increased our international student recruitment very dramatically this year, far in excess of target, so we were already receiving income in excess of that expected.

Secondly, we have two intakes a year for international students, who are mostly undertaking postgraduate programmes. We think our autumn intake will be significantly down, but many who planned to start in the autumn will now start with the February intake, so we should be able to bounce back within the next academic year rather than waiting until the following year. That said, we have no doubt that international recruitment will be down, particularly as the crisis and surrounding publicity of the death toll in the UK is being reported back to us by our recruitment teams around the world.

### Putting students first

In addition to waiving residency fees for the summer term, we established a 'no detriment' policy, meaning students could not end the year with a final mark worse than the mark they were sitting on before all this chaos.

Some universities have abandoned exams, but we didn't think that was in the best interest of students. So we introduced the no detriment policy which meant we had to rework all the processes around marking, assessment and exam boards and all the data processes and algorithms that go into working out a degree mark. Many staff worked

day and night to get these systems and processes developed in time.

### Helping the community

We're confident that we can come back from this as a really strong, coherent community, but we're also confident that we can make a contribution to helping businesses and our wider society recover.

Just after the lockdown began, I had staff asking if they could get back onto campus. We've got a world leading product design centre and we do amazing things with 3D printing, and staff were asking to get back there to make visors and other PPE.

We also had staff wanting to lend some of our expensive scientific equipment to the National Testing Centre at Milton Keynes. There are only 100 Thermo Fisher 7500 ABI Fast Platform machines in the UK and we've got two of them, so we lent our two to the national testing efforts for Covid-19 at the first national testing centre in Milton Keynes. We also became the trail centre for a new blood donation model in partnership with the Welsh Blood Service and have hosted the donation centre on campus, so we've had staff, students and Cardiff residents coming onto campus to donate blood.

Everyone was willing to help and wanted to feel that they'd made a contribution. Our people have made us proud, and I'm confident that they will continue to do Wales proud in the months and years ahead.

That's why I am optimistic about our ability to recover as an institution, but more importantly about our ability to contribute to recovery in industry and business, and in wider civic society. There will need to be a lot of rebuilding in society as well as in the economy after the pandemic is over. We believe we can contribute in five ways, which form the subject of a special feature article that accompanies this column on Business News Wales.

# Five Ways Cardiff Met can Help Wales Recover From the Covid-19 Crisis

As one of Wales' leading higher education institutions, Cardiff Metropolitan University plays a crucial role in the country's economic life.

In the wake of the worst shock to the nation's economy for generations, that role will assume even greater importance in the next few years.

Professor Cara Aitchison, President and Vice-Chancellor of Cardiff Met, is full of confidence about the university's ability to contribute to Wales' recovery. There are five ways in particular, she feels, in which Cardiff Met can make a rapid and vital contribution.

## Cardiff School of Technologies

Launched just two years ago, Cardiff Met's School of Technologies has proved popular with student recruits and is already turning out its first graduates. Students leaving the school have the skills employers need, and will need in even greater supply in the years to come as the economy recovers and rebuilds. The School specialises in digital technology, data science, design technology and systems engineering; all the areas that are clustering in South Wales and that are going to be a real engine house for the economy.

Besides the graduates now leaving the School and looking for their first jobs in industry, there are also students still at the university who want to work with employers while they're doing their degree. Whether employers need people with new skills, or additional support to get new technology in place, Cardiff Met can help them.

## Global Academies

Academia is renowned for people working in silos and ivory towers, and not connecting very effectively with industry. Cardiff Met has tried to tackle that phenomenon by drawing together different disciplines into University-wide Global Academies in areas where it thinks it can make an immediate impact, often at an international level but also across Wales.

Cardiff Met identified three areas where it could draw together people from across the university to work with industry to help push economic development forward. One of the Global Academies is focused on the strength that Cardiff Met already has in food science, food safety and food security. Food businesses are among those that have been most severely impacted by the pandemic, but they also have the ability to get back on their feet pretty quickly. Cardiff Met is keen to help industry recover, and is already running sessions aimed at helping the food sector get back up and running as quickly as possible.

The second of the Academies is the Global Academy for Human-Centred Design. Cardiff Met has a good record in working with small businesses to get their products to market and to commercialise new ideas using the latest

design technology, and this Academy builds on that expertise and knowledge.

The third Global Academy is focused on Health and Human Performance and has grown from the merger of Sport and Health three years ago to form one of the UK's largest Schools of Sport and Health Sciences. The health sector has been impacted more than any other by the pandemic. Cardiff Met has got real expertise in the field that it believes can help the health sector develop and come out of Covid into new ways of working, using resources differently and more effectively to work with populations to improve physical activity and health.

## Degree apprenticeships

Degree apprenticeships are an increasingly popular alternative to the difficult choice of whether to take a degree or take an apprenticeship. They offer students the possibility of getting a degree level qualification while earning an income.

Until now there has been a relatively narrow offering of degree apprenticeships in Wales, but the likely difficult economic times ahead as we gradually come out of the recession will force Wales to think more proactively about degree apprenticeships. Cardiff Met has already had a successful programme with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) offering a Degree Apprenticeship in Data Science, and Prof Aitchison thinks there will be more. "Industry will demand degree apprenticeships, and we are ready and willing to contribute," she said.

## The Cardiff Met Edge

Another platform in the university's strategic plan is something it calls the Cardiff Met EDGE. The EDGE is an acronym for Ethical, Digital, Global and Entrepreneurial, a combination of skills and experiences the university wants to instil in all its students as they go out into the workplace.

*"We need our students to have those capacities and capabilities, so that they make a contribution not just through being a whizz in digital technology, but also by approaching things from a global mindset and an ethical stance, and by being able to be enterprising themselves," said Prof Aitchison.*

## Civic mission

Finally, there's what Education Minister Kirsty Williams calls universities' civic mission. Cardiff Met has been doing a lot of work during the lockdown to provide education, sport and exercise for local communities. Students on Initial Teacher Education programmes have been supporting parents involved in home schooling, and staff have been offering a range of classes and activities to keep both adults and children fit and active. As we come out of the lockdown, the University will be focused on the close link between health and wellbeing and economic recovery. "We can't look at these two things separately; if we haven't got a healthy workforce – and it's about mental health as much as physical health – we can't possibly think that we can be innovative and entrepreneurial," said Prof Aitchison.

## She added:

*"We've got a lot to offer around entrepreneurship, and also around social cohesion and wellbeing. The big issue for all of us is going to be linking these two things together; how do we become a sustainable economy with the potential to grow, while also developing a really healthy population?"*

*With a positive will and good connections with industry, there's no reason why we can't do this. It's going to be a really interesting couple of years."*

# £5m Funding Provides Boost for South East Wales Metro Plus

The Cardiff Capital Region Transport Authority (RTA), which comprises elected transport portfolio leads from the ten local authorities in South-East Wales, has announced notification of its successful application for Welsh Government LTF funding, in conjunction with a series of updates on the south East Wales Metro and Metro Plus Schemes.

These schemes include the 10 'Future Mobility' Metro plus Phase 1 projects, the Metro Enhancement Framework (MEF) Programme and the proposed Metro Plus Phase 2 Programme.

**A summary of the key updates follows below:**

## LTF Award

Following positive feedback from Welsh Government (WG) on the RTA's bid for 2020/21 LTF funding, £5m of the original £7m request has been secured.

This significant allocation of LTF from Welsh Government for the development and delivery of, Metro plus Phase 1, Metro plus Phase 2 and the MEF Corridors development work, will be made to Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council in their capacity as Lead Authority. To coordinate delivery and maximise opportunity, programme management of the funds will be overseen through the Regional Transport Authority and the Officer working group, which will align to Merthyr's internal governance arrangements for overseeing the drawdown of the grant.

The £5m LTF funding in conjunction with the £5m allocated City Deal funds for Metro phase 1 ensures that all Metro phase 1, phase 2 and MEF development work can progress in line with current plans. The shortfall of £2m is considered sustainable due to the Covid



conditions which are likely to prevail for much of the period in question.

## Metro Phase 1

All Metro Phase 1 projects are progressing in line with expectations. Both the Pentrebach Park and Ride scheme and the Abertillery Transport Interchange scheme are now also showing progress despite complex land acquisition challenges.

The Metro plus Phase 1 schemes that make up the programme are:

- › Pontypool and New Inn Park and Ride
- › Severn Tunnel Junction Park and Ride
- › Pyle Park and Ride
- › Pentrebach Interchange
- › Porth Transport Interchange
- › Abertillery Transport Hub
- › Caerphilly Interchange
- › Barry Docks Interchange
- › Cardiff East Bus Priority
- › Newport to Cardiff Transport Priority
- › Metro Enhancement Framework

All 4 transport corridor programmes which include:

- › NW Cardiff
- › Cardiff - Vale of Glamorgan
- › Cardiff - Maesteg - Bridgend - Porthcawl and
- › Newport - Chepstow

Are making steady progress with NW Cardiff and Newport - Chepstow ready to move to the next WelTAG stage.

## Metro Phase 2

The Metro Plus Phase 2 programme is at the very early stages of development and includes the following schemes:

- › Abergavenny station interchange & improvements
- › Cardiff Bus Priority
- › Cwmbran Interchange
- › Cogan Interchange
- › Ystrad Mynach P&R extension
- › Hirwaun Rail extension and P&R
- › Cardiff Bus priority between Newport city centre and the International Conference Centre Wales
- › Brackla Railway Station
- › Pencoed Crossing
- › Merthyr Rail - Bus Connectivity and
- › Brynmawr Transport Interchange

## Sustainable Transport

It was also noted that an aggregate £26,112,817 in the form of "Expressions of Interest" had been submitted to the Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport by the 10 CCR local authorities for the pursuance of sustainable transport measures in respect of Covid-19.

**Councillor Huw David, Chair of the CCR Transport Authority, and Leader of Bridgend County Borough Council, said:**

“ This is excellent news for the Cardiff Capital Region. The WG award represents a significant investment in our

transportation and will allow us to proceed with confidence.

*I am also delighted that despite the challenges we have all faced over recent months that we continue to make such good progress on all our transport programmes. Every single local authority area will benefit from transport infrastructure improvements from Bridgend in the west to Monmouthshire in East, in our cities and in our valleys so it is vital we sustain momentum across the whole portfolio of transport initiatives.”*

**Kellie Beirne, Director CCR City Deal said:**

“ This portfolio of transport initiative is fundamental to our ambition to create a truly Connected, Competitive, Resilient region.

*I am delighted we have been able to secure the LTF funding award, and at the levels of collaboration we are continuing to experience despite the immense challenges being faced by everyone.*

*“It is a testament to the hard work, commitment and dedication of everyone involved that we continue to be able to report such positive progress.”*

# £1.3m Welsh Government's Transformation Fund to Assist CCR Ambition

At its latest meeting on June 4 2020, the Cardiff Capital Region Transport Authority (RTA), which comprises elected transport portfolio leads from the ten local authorities in South-East Wales, has announced notification of its successful application for a share of the Welsh Government (WG) Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Transformation Fund.

The award, which at £1.3m, constitutes the highest award made in Wales, follows a bid made by Merthyr Council in February 2020 on behalf of the CCR, to assist with the delivery of electric vehicle infrastructure for public use, taxis and private hire specific, and buses at various locations, including transport hubs throughout the region.

This funding, being made available through WG, is intended to assist the WG transform the network to ULEV and help reach their targets of zero emissions from buses and taxis by 2028.

## Award Criteria and Management

The conditions mandate that the £1.3m award to the CCR is used as follows:

- › £1,040,000 for Taxi ULEV Infrastructure
- › £100k for Bus ULEV Infrastructure at the new Merthyr bus station
- › £100k to prepare a full business case to deliver ULEV Infrastructure at transport interchanges; and £56k for EV Roadshow with Drive and Ride Opportunities.



All monies must be deployed by the end of the 2020/2021 financial year.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council will be the lead authority and will manage the ULEV

Transformation Fund. It is anticipated that a Project Manager will be seconded into the City Deal

Office to deliver the work packages and to facilitate sustained momentum in progressing the regional programme.

## Benefits to the Region

The progression of the ULEV initiatives and associated funding is a big step forward in the ambitions for not only improving the transport infrastructure of the Cardiff Capital Region but also for the reduction in emissions and noise pollution and the knock on benefits of improvements in biodiversity in the region. By delivering regionally, it will ensure that operationally, the end user will have a uniform process for using charging infrastructure across all 10 Local Authorities, with payment methods and infrastructure being dependable and user friendly. Initiatives such as these will help Wales play a full part in tackling climate change and the CCR will work with the other regions within Wales to try to ensure comparable and compatible infrastructure throughout Wales.

Further next steps will include the consideration of renewable energy and digital required to truly embrace the zero emissions agenda and the new technologies that could be developed to future proof the project in line

with the Well-being and Future Generations Act and vision.

## Incentivisation

With lower operating costs than conventionally fuelled vehicles, transitioning to a ULEV vehicle is likely to make long term economic sense for taxi drivers. However given the revenue challenges experienced in recent times the capital cost of transition is likely to prove challenging. Although Merthyr CBC also applied for funding to incentivise taxis and community transport to take up ULEVs, it is recognised that this may be better delivered on a wider national basis and therefore funding has yet to be awarded to the region. Accordingly, there was consensus within the RTA that further collaborations and engagement should take place with WG to explore a way forward to deliver the aspirations to offer such incentives through this fund and through the financial transaction fund that is also being made available. This could enable taxi, private hire, and community transport and bus companies to accelerate the transition from diesel to ULEVs.

This will also ensure that monies spent on creating the electric infrastructure is accompanied with incentives that help sustain a modal shift toward ULEV usage.

**Councillor Huw David, Chair of the CCR Transport Authority, and Leader of Bridgend County Borough Council, said:**

“ The CCR aims to be an exemplar in Wales to help drive the nation forward, and this funding will go a long way to support this ambition. It will help to put the region on a pathway to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050, with taxis and buses accelerated much earlier in line with WG’s 2028 target. Stating an ambition for the CCR to become an exemplar region for ULEVs will help attract investment in recharging and refuelling infrastructure, and will in turn create the conditions for high rates of ULEV uptake.

The CCR is well placed to benefit from a shift to ULEVs over the next 10 years and

beyond and is doing all it can to deliver on our regional ULEV strategy and our aspirations for the future of transport throughout the CCR and wider surrounding areas in Wales. This will benefit not only our residents, but our visitors and neighbours alike.

The delivery of this programme will help us realise our vision for the future of transport, accelerate our transition to ULEV usage and sustain real behavioural change.”

**Kellie Beirne Director CCR City Deal said:**

“ More excellent news for transport infrastructure in the Cardiff Capital Region. We have a real opportunity here to lead the way, to make a difference and set the standard for Wales. We need growth to be in clean, green energy, and we will be doing everything we can to ensure that all funding is able to facilitate real change in behaviours, new norms and not perpetuate a status quo.”



# New Audio Series Set to Outline the Next Chapter in the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Story

Starting from next week this new insightful podcast series will tell the ongoing story of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal as it emerges tentatively from lockdown into a period of economic recovery.

The series will feature governing body Chairs and senior leaders across the CCR City Deal giving personal, business and operational perspectives on a combination of future challenges, progress on current investments and the launch of new funding interventions and investments, all intended to keep those with an interest in business in the region fully abreast of the latest developments.

The series is being commissioned and produced by Business News Wales and will be the first of its kind in Wales.

**CCR Marketing and Communications Lead Suzanne Chesterton said:**

“ We have a great story to tell and are committed to ensuring that the work we are doing to move our region forward is easily accessible, comprehensible and digestible. To that end we are adopting as many techniques as practical in the current climate to present the information in different formats using different media to cater for different preferences.

*This new podcast series will offer a variety of perspectives on the same theme – the challenges, hopes and aspirations in a post Covid-19 world – all narrated by the Chairs and senior leaders within the CCR City Deal. Accompanied with a range of supplemental features, the podcasts will be packed full of information and insight with something for everyone. We trust you will find them enjoyable and interesting.*

**Managing Director of Business News Wales Mark Powney said:**

“ The Cardiff Capital Region City Deal is a powerful vehicle that will have a big impact on the fortunes of businesses across South Wales. Telling the story of this fast-moving organisation is of high interest to our readers.

*Whilst the series will be factually driven, it also gives us the opportunity to learn about and understand the individuals helping to shape Wales. Every week critical decisions are made as part of the transformation of the region, and we felt an audio series would be the best fit to keep on top of fast-moving developments.*



**CERYS FURLONG**

**RETHINKING OUR**

**APPROACH MUST BE THE**

**LEGACY OF COVID-19**



# Rethinking our Approach Must be the Legacy of Covid-19



Covid-19 has been and continues to be a dreadful experience for many people across Cardiff Capital Region.

**Cerys Furlong**

Board member CCR Regional Skills Partnership and CEO Chwarae Teg

But there have also been some positive lessons we can draw from this time, and there are opportunities as we come out of it to build new businesses and better communities. There are implications too for the sort of investment decisions we make in the City Deal.

## Impact is not equal

What's been brought into very sharp focus is how the crisis is impacting differently on different groups of people. We know that the economic effects of the lockdown are having a disproportionate impact on some groups of people, who are also worse off from the years of austerity. If we're interested in equality, then we have to think about how we try to invest differently to address that fact.

It's a similar argument around sustainability. If we think about the type of things we want to invest in, let's be sure they are sustainable for the long term – not just economically, that they are designed to be sustainable, to make a positive contribution, and they're not reinforcing old, bad habits.

We've seen some of the worst aspects of how power operates in our economy laid bare. Work

like cleaning, caring, and catering, that was always thought of as low skilled, low paid, perhaps even low value. Suddenly we are all very reliant on those things and the people who do that work. We need them to keep us safe, keep us cared for, and keep us well.

So we need to put the people who do that sort of work at the heart of the decisions we make, and that's quite a big shift from what's happened to date, not just here in Wales but everywhere.

**“ The people whose voices are not being heard around the table need to be heard, and as a nation we need to put our money on the things that matter most and where our values are.**

## Time for a new approach

In this kind of situation there can be a tendency to think, let's get things back to normal as quickly as possible, when actually what we all need to think is, do we want to get back to the normal that we had, because some of the structures that existed have

been really damaging. We can see that in sharp focus now in terms of people with poor health, and poor access to the labour market.

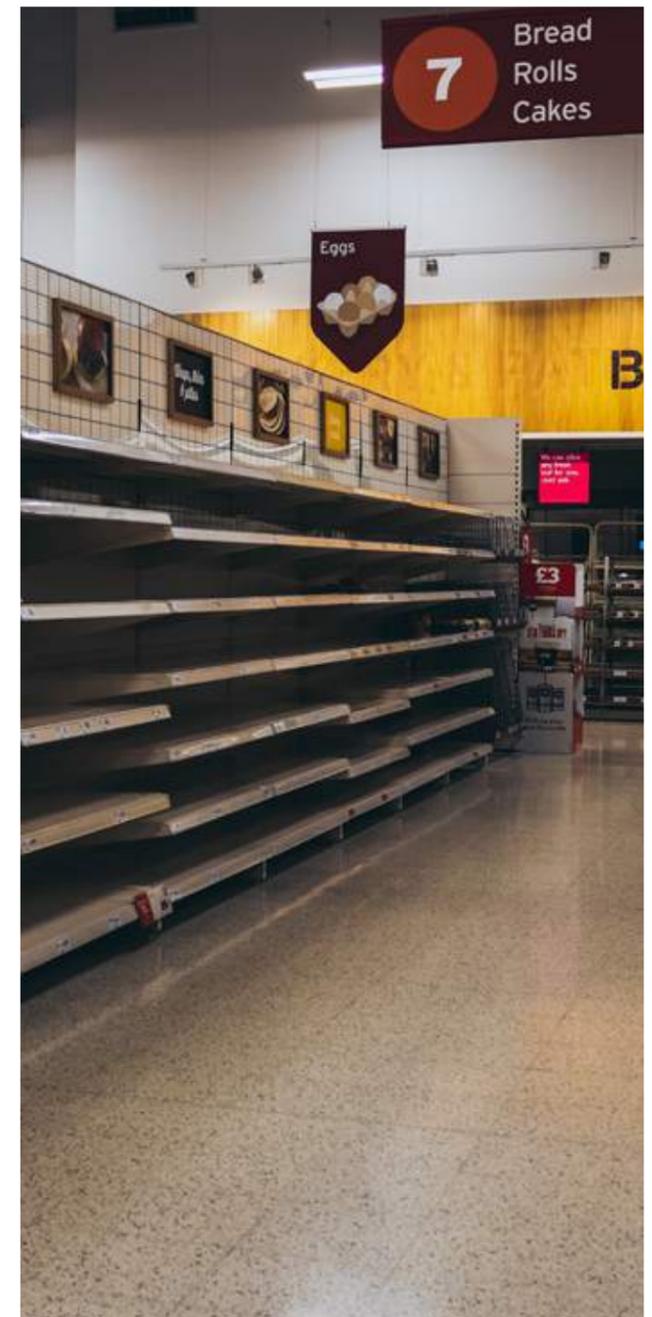
In the past our approach to economic development has been dominated by the familiar statistics. We measured GDP, we measured GVA, but we didn't measure people's wellbeing. We've thought about investing in physical infrastructure, but what about our social infrastructure?

We need to start thinking about things in a different way, like how would you stimulate the economy to shape it the way we want, so we're not so reliant on some frankly unsustainable and precarious industries. That's quite a big shift.

Often in crises long-term thinking can be thought of as a bit of a luxury, even when it comes to tackling critical issues. But for those of us who are in a position of influence, we need to use that privilege and think long term. It's our responsibility to make sure we're diligent in doing that.

This should be a massive opportunity to get people who've been locked out of the labour market previously into work. Disabled people, for example, have extremely low rates of employment. With lots of organisations switching to remote and off-site working, that should enable us to recruit much more diverse people into our places of work, which has to be good for everybody.

**“ We must reinforce some of those positive things that we've learnt, so we can have a positive impact on the environment, the economy and our communities. Let that be the legacy of Covid-19.**



# Penguin Portals' CEO Elena Betes Speaks About Life as an Entrepreneur



Elena Betes  
CEO, Penguin Portals

Elena Betes, the head of Penguin Portals, a network of comparison businesses within Admiral Group, knows what it's like to live through difficult times as an entrepreneur.

Her first Spanish business, which she set up in emulation of Confused.com, struggled for lack of capital and scale; a second in Germany went bankrupt in the financial crisis of 2008.

Having come through those experiences and subsequently successfully run Admiral's Spanish comparison site for more than a decade, she is well qualified to give tips to entrepreneurs looking to set up their own businesses in the challenging times post-Covid.

Her journey as an entrepreneur started when she was a young MBA student in Spain in the early 2000s. Two incidents in particular left a lasting impression on her. Her father was made redundant at the age of 53. Then the company Elena was working for, Arthur Andersen, was forced out of business as a result of the Enron scandal. Unsettled by the thought that working in a corporate her destiny would be in someone else's hands, Elena decided instead to set up her own business.

Her first idea was to go into the hotel industry, and she decided to get some experience of the business by joining a large hotel group at the bottom. But a few days cleaning rooms convinced her she was wasting her time.

"A lot of entrepreneurs without experience have these fantastic ideas about how they're going to change the world, then when you get into the operation you realise it wasn't so fantastic, or wasn't feasible," she said.

## Becoming an entrepreneur

Elena realised she wanted to set up a business that would help people. She was inspired by Confused.com, which was already operating in the UK, and how it helped people, who didn't necessarily have any financial education, save money on their insurance.

As a young woman with no business experience she couldn't get any money from the banks, so she borrowed from family and friends.

*"People don't realise, when you are starting a business, it's really scary to spend the money of your family and friends. Everybody says be a risk taker, but you have your heart in your mouth. You have this huge investment in technology, is it going to work or not?" she said.*

The company grew, although it was still making losses, and Elena joined a group who were willing to give her capital to set up another site in Germany.

*"You gain confidence in yourself when somebody takes a bet on you, you get better. Someone is giving you money because they trust in you. It makes you more of a risk taker," she said.*

But then came the 2008 financial crisis, and the capital supply dried up. On the day the company was declared bankrupt, Admiral's co-founder and then CEO Henry Engelhardt came to visit Elena in her London office.

*"He said, you tried in Spain but didn't have the scale, you tried in Germany, why don't you try again with us? I had been trying this business model and using Confused.com as my goal. I thought, I cannot say no, I need to get in and understand how this business model works and try it again," Elena said.*

So she returned to Spain with her one-year-old child, and set up Rastreator.com, Admiral's first overseas comparison site business. It was a success, and was followed by other businesses in other countries which have now been brought together, along with Confused.com, under the Penguin Portals umbrella of which Elena is the CEO. Although part of the Admiral group, Penguin Portals operates separately, and each of its constituent businesses such as Confused and Rastreator has a very large degree of autonomy to operate according to local conditions.

## Success at Rastreator

Elena attributes her success at Rastreator to a number of things.

*"I wasn't the same any more, the learning I had gone through had made me completely different. I had been tried and tested, I knew what to do, I knew what I had to do when things went wrong," she said.*

*The second reason was, when someone bets on you, it's easier to take risks. So you are more risk averse when you are by yourself than when you have somebody who has experience trusting you."*

She describes her position as being a corporate entrepreneur within Admiral, and says she feels very supported in that role.

"Admiral is a company built by entrepreneurs; they really give you space, and that is necessary for entrepreneurs. You should not be afraid of failing, you should be afraid of not learning from failure," she said.

Being at Admiral also meant she no longer had to worry about capital, which gave her more time to concentrate on the business.

"The problem with being an entrepreneur is that half of the time you're focusing on getting the cash you need, and half the time you're focusing on operations. When I landed in Admiral, 100% of my time was focused on the business, on the customers. This makes a difference because you have more time," she added.

## So what advice does Elena have for new entrepreneurs? She said:

*"The first lesson is, it's not easy. It's all about preparation and working hard. Check that you are ready for this hard work, that you have a high level*

*of energy and motivation, because it's not going to be easy. A lot of people may not have the resilience to change and change as needed.*

*When you are starting out get operational experience. If you don't have it, there are a lot of people that have been retired. They are amazing, they have knowledge, they are in society and we don't use them. Of course, they're not going to work 24 hours, but they want to come back and you should listen to them.*

*You should know where you are headed when you want to be an entrepreneur. You really have to be willing to do everything, and be familiar with the concept of what you want to achieve.*

*Sometimes on the way you forget why you started. It's really important to come back to it and say, I started for that reason, so I'm not going to do that other thing. As an entrepreneur you do everything you do to make your dreams happen, and you should not throw away your dreams. When you have investors putting pressure on you it's not easy.*

*So be clear why you started because otherwise you won't inspire people to follow you. Surround yourself with people that know what you're trying to do, that believe in it and want to do it."*

Elena Betes has travelled a long journey from her first days as a struggling entrepreneur in Spain to leading Penguin Portals' comparison platforms for financial services business in the UK, France, Spain, Mexico and India. Plans are well advanced for the launch of another comparison site later this year. The next stage of the journey will be worth watching.



# Regional Cabinet Backs Further Investment in CCR City Deal Projects

The Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) Regional Cabinet has approved further investment for key City Deal projects.

## The investments approved are:

**£250,000 Seed funding for Fintech Wales – a not-for-profit body representing Fintech and Financial Services businesses in Wales.**

The seed funding proposal is designed to support the growth of a key cluster within the CCR and establish a thriving leading edge ecosystem in the region. The seed funding allocation is intended to allow a nine-month programme of essential work to be undertaken to establish and evidence the building blocks required to grow the Fintech sector's sustainability in the region and the rest of Wales. This work, which will output in a series of studies and reports, will include feasibility assessments to build strategic hubs in Cardiff, Bridgend, and Cwmbran.

**£40,000 to progress a potential £4m investment for a CCR healthcare data company**

This is an innovative development in the healthcare-related, data science field for an organisation that provides independent evidence for healthcare services and the pharmaceutical industry.

The proposal is for an investment to finalise the development, and subsequent commercialization, of a new analytical software product that has the potential to cut the time to analyse data from months to days. This is particularly pertinent when considered in the current Covid-19 environment.

A £40,000 spend from the City Deal Programme Development Fund has been agreed in order to move this proposal forward through due diligence and creation of a full business case.

This investment exemplifies the objectives and outcomes of the City Deal. Specifically, the company aims to employ a large number of local graduates and postgraduates in highly skilled, highly paid jobs that are future proofed.

**£125,000 to progress to the next stages of an "Evergreen fund" for Strategic Premises**

This is a £50m plus investment intended to support otherwise viable industrial development projects where there is evidence of market failure affecting financial viability. There will be particular emphasis on projects that support innovation and job creation and make use of brownfield sites to create Grade A or equivalent space.

The hope is that this will help bring forward schemes that otherwise might struggle to progress without this type of strategic support because they cannot get all the funding they need in the current environment.

This initiative sees the CCR City Deal move away from "business as usual" investments, and enables it to support initiatives that bring about differentiated approaches, approaches that will support home and local working and in turn help create positive new futures.

The next stage is the appointment of a fund manager and production of a full business case over the summer months.

**£120,000 to progress a proposal to develop a Life Sciences Innovation Park at Coryton, Cardiff.**

This is a co-investment proposal with a Cardiff-based developer to establish the site as a strategic hub for fuelling regional medtech growth.

The project proposal seeks to provide up to 225,000 sq. ft. of Grade A office and R&D space and services for circa 2,000 high value jobs.

This project is of strategic significance to the region and will help facilitate the development

of the characteristics associated with more mature sectors such as Compound Semi-Conductors.

**In principle agreement to a £10 million Challenge fund**

Re-building local wealth at a foundational level is one of the 10 CCR post-Covid 19 priorities published in May.

The focus of the proposed new £10m programme is to re-build local economies through solving societal challenges that have economic impact and potential commercial-scale opportunities.

In practice, this will work through selecting two to three challenges to form the focus of individual challenge funds with the idea being to contribute to new ideas, solutions and projects that contribute to the new momentum and 'new reality' of the post-Covid 19 world.

All the projects, which have been submitted through the CCR Investment and Intervention framework launched last summer, were approved following CCR Investment Panel recommendation.

**Cllr Anthony Hunt, Chair of the Cardiff Capital Region Regional Cabinet which comprises the leaders of the 10 local authorities in South-East Wales who comprise the CCR, said:**

*"This package of approved investments adds up to an ambitious programme of support for innovation, resilience and connectivity in the Capital Region; and comes amid a recognition that, in a time of crisis, the region must do whatever it can to help its people, businesses and communities to not just survive the crisis but to emerge stronger and better equipped to prosper in the new world.*

*I am confident that the projects we are progressing represent the right investments. Our Challenge fund, in particular, through identifying new ways of solving intractable problems, will help ensure we focus our collective efforts on the things that will have the greatest impact."*

**Kellie Beirne, Director CCR City Deal said:**

*"The aim of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal has always been to make the region more connected, competitive, and resilient, and to address the social and geographical inequalities within it. As the region emerges from lockdown into recovery, this aim has become more important than ever.*

*The 10 priorities we restated in May represented where we think we can most usefully support our businesses and communities and reconfirmed that the priority sectors we had identified for support are the ones that will best help our region prosper in the new economic landscape. The decisions made by the Regional Cabinet to progress this latest series of investments represent a big step forward in realising the ambitions set out in our priorities and I look forward to collaborating with colleagues across the sectors, Welsh Government and the 10 local authorities to progress towards implementation."*



## PODCAST

### Cardiff Capital Region – Lockdown to Delivery – Episode 1

Welcome to the new podcast series telling the ongoing story of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal as it emerges from lockdown into a new delivery phase.

In this episode we talk to Rhys Thomas Chief Operating Officer of the CCR about:

- › The progress that's been made over the last few months on the investments already in the pipeline including Digital and Housing.
- › The types of proposal coming into the pipeline and in particular what CCR want to see more of.
- › Investments approved since lockdown and why they are the right things to be investing in right now.
- › Rhys' hopes for the future
- › We hope you find the series informative and interesting.

**LISTEN/WATCH NOW**



## Cardiff Capital Region: Interview with Rhys Thomas

Rhys Thomas, Chief Operating Officer of Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, spoke with Mark Powney, MD at Business News Wales

**Tell us about yourself, what is your background and what does your day to day role consist of?**

*I'm a Welshman from West Wales, came up to the Cardiff Capital Region to go to university 20 years ago and I've never left. I've spent most of my career working at Cardiff University in various roles, but the latter couple of years were really focused on innovation and economic development and how the university's contribution to the wider society and economy could be maximised.*

*No two days are alike, but the ultimate aspect of it is to support the governance and administration of the City Deal, while at the same time looking for investment propositions and nurturing them, and putting them through challenge to make sure we make the right investment decisions at the end of the day.*

**It's a challenging, interesting time for you...**

*As for everybody else. Our way of working was turned upside down overnight. We responded positively, we're into a new groove of working from home. The levels of interest and investment requests haven't dried up, if anything they've increased, and there are some challenges for us in that in terms of how we manage everybody's expectations.*

**We saw a range of investment decisions made in early March. Can you give us an update? Where are we with the Housing Investment Fund?**

*We've been progressing the procurement of the technical advisers over the last couple of months and we've recently made an appointment. CBRE will be advising us how we take forward the viability gap element of the fund. We're looking forward to that; they've got great experience doing similar things across the UK, including the Housing Investment Fund that UK Government introduced for England.*

*There's been a lot of conversations taking place with local authorities to prime them to bring forward appropriate sites, so there'll be more to communicate on this over the next 6-9 months.*

**Digital connectivity is a priority for all of us in the region, where are we with the roll out of 5G and the advancement of a fibre provision programme?**

*A lot of work has gone into ensuring that we secure the DCMS project for rural connected communities, that's focused in the Blaenau Gwent area and Monmouthshire, and we're working with the consortium partners to try and scope out the wider programme and see if we can make that work.*

*In terms of the full fibre provision programme across the region, we're going through the process, understanding where we are with it, where our partners are. Covid has had an impact on this project, partly because of a concern over long-term investment; that's being worked through at the moment. We'll be able to progress with it in the near future.*

**What about the Life Sciences Park?**

*We've done a fair amount of due diligence, the outline business case was considered by the Regional Cabinet on Monday, they've approved that and we're moving forward to the full business case. It demonstrates that CCR is a good place for life sciences and medtech in particular. We've got some good strengths in our R&D base, a good supply of the right skill mix required to make this cluster succeed in the future, all the things we knew but have now been validated, so that gives us confidence to progress. We are continuing to develop the underlying business plan for the Life Sciences Park with our joint venture partners. Hopefully we'll be able to announce a more formal decision on that in the early autumn.*

**How have these decisions been impacted by the lockdown, or is good progress continuing to be made?**

The lockdown hasn't affected our business continuity at all; we've had four investment panel meetings since lockdown, three regional cabinet meetings. Our basic machinery is working well, we're continuing to work in a different way, it's not slowing down progress.

**Given the huge financial impact businesses have encountered and timing gaps in support packages, have you seen an upsurge in requests for investment?**

We've seen an upsurge in enquiries, some of them are not appropriate for the City Deal; that's not to say they were not good or viable projects, they were just not the structure for us to move forward. Some of them were more high risk or requiring more working capital, and that's not really the space of the City Deal. The City Deal is a 20-year programme looking at economic growth and regeneration. We shouldn't lose sight of our medium and long-term plans, while working with our partners in UK Government and Welsh Government to ensure some of the more immediate needs are also addressed.

**Can you expand on the number of applications that have come forward? Are you seeing more requests for certain types of project?**

Since the lockdown our investment panel has considered 14 new submissions, 6 of those have been supported for further consideration and development. There has been a growth in the propositions coming forward in the wider medtech area linked to the health agenda; the business opportunity is greater in those areas at this time arguably.

**Are there any types of investment proposal you'd like to attract more of?**

We'd be keen to look at more large-scale transformative projects, that would have a bigger impact on the region. We are seeing a lot of businesses coming forward with business specific propositions, but we need to challenge ourselves a bit more as a region; we need to push on a bit harder on some of the larger, more transformative projects.

**Can you talk to us about what the evergreen fund for strategic premises is about? Also, investments in fintech and medtech?**

The premises fund is something we've had on our horizon for a while, the Covid-19 pandemic has just accelerated our thinking behind it. It's a complementary fund to the Housing Investment Fund; it's going to be targeted predominantly on industrial and commercial premises, to support our key clusters that we've identified in our industrial and economic growth plan. We'll be looking for developers to come forward with propositions; we'll provide them with development finance, subject to the rigours of due diligence. We'd be looking to the developers to refinance after they've built it and got some tenants in, allowing us to recycle that money into other projects.

With fintech, we've agreed to provide £250,000 seed funding to Fintech Wales, which will allow a 9 month programme of essential work to be carried out to establish and evidence the building blocks required to grow the sector's sustainability in the region. This work will include feasibility assessments to build strategic hubs in Cardiff, Bridgend and Cwmbran. We're looking to work closely with partners in the private sector, the fintechs themselves and with Welsh Government to see how we nurture and stretch the cluster in the future.

In medtech, there's been a growth of interest from companies in the sector as I outlined earlier, and I'm pleased to say we've agreed an investment in a new technology that is Covid-related, we'll be able to say more about that in the very near future. We're also looking to support a few other businesses where their capability will help with future pandemics, so they've got a short-term benefit but they've also got a resilient, strong forward business plan that we're quite confident in.

**The CCR has stated its 10 priorities for addressing the impact of Covid-19. There's a lot of focus on new funding interventions; one is setting up a rebuilding local economies challenge programme, what will that deliver for us?**

This is something we identified in our Investment Framework last year as a priority for the city region, we've been working on it since then. Again, the pandemic has sharpened our thinking around this, it's now much more focused on how we rebuild our local economies that have been affected quite

hard by the crisis. We'll be engaging stakeholders over the summer to identify what challenges we should be bringing forward, and working with them and others to deliver them for us. We are hopeful we'll be working closely with our partners at Cardiff University to deliver this programme based on their experiences of Innovate to Save, and building on the experiences the wider government agencies across the UK have had.

All these are interventions targeted at where we don't know what the solution is but we know what the problem is, and if we open that problem up as a challenge to the community, we should get different actors coming forward with different perspectives of how to address them. It's being much more open to that innovation and addressing some of the inequalities we face in our communities at present.

**The priorities include working with investment partners to create the SME Co-investment Fund, what will this be looking to achieve and what is the timeframe for delivery?**

The overarching objective is to create a cluster growth fund to support our key businesses and clusters; we are seeing demand for growth capital for those businesses, who are established but looking to take the next step and transform themselves. It will probably be towards the end of this calendar year, that's when I'd hope we'd be making that fund live.

**What are your hopes for what we'll have achieved by next year?**

I'd hope that by this time next year, a lot of the projects you've referred to will be in delivery, people will be able to see the impact of them, they'll be making differences to our businesses and our communities. We are learning as we go along so we are evolving, the SME Co-investment Fund is a good example of responding to the needs we're identifying.

**Covid is affecting how everyone is working; how is CCR responding, how is everybody communicating and making these decisions?**

We're using a lot of video conferencing, working in a much more agile and flexible way than we've done in the past. The relationships are mature relationships and they've responded well.



# FinTech Wales Awarded £250,000 to Shape the Future of FinTech in Wales

FinTech Wales has been awarded £250,000 by Cardiff Capital Region to help shape the future of fintech in Wales.

FinTech Wales, the not-for-profit organisation aiming to make Wales a leading pillar of the global fintech landscape, has started working on a 10-year roadmap for the sector. It has also secured £250,000 in seed funding from Cardiff Capital Region.

FinTech Wales is seeking the help of more than 150 companies from across the nation who play a role in the Welsh fintech and financial services environment to help plot the roadmap. The roadmap will then define the next ten years of technology and skills development needs to secure, grow, and innovate in the fintech sector in Wales, while supporting the wider UK ambition.

The organisation has also been awarded £250,000 by Cardiff Capital Region to enable its vision of making Wales a global player in the fintech and financial services sector – as well as making it the go-to destination for fintech businesses, small or large. The seed funding allocation will allow a nine-month programme of essential work to be undertaken to establish and evidence the building blocks required to grow the fintech sector's sustainability in Wales.

**Gavin Powell, General Secretary of FinTech Wales, said of the Cardiff Capital Region funding:**

“As a not for profit membership organisation we are thrilled that Cardiff Capital Region has awarded us this funding, allowing us to further support our members, as well as helping us plot an environment where fintech and financial services businesses have a secure foundation in Wales.”

**Kellie Beirne, Director of CR City Deal, said:**

“I am delighted that we are able to support Fintech Wales. The fintech sector has a significant role to play in helping the economic recovery from Covid-19, not just in financial services, but also in its ability to make a transformational contribution to other sectors and initiatives such as net zero carbon, green economy, energy, and transport.

*This allocation represents the largest seed funding award provided by the CCR to date and evidences the importance of the sector within our Economic and Industrial Plan. It also bears testament to the commitment of Fintech Wales and its corporate members to push forwards with developments that will be transformative for Wales and the region.”*

**Gavin continued:**

“This funding will now help FinTech Wales achieve its ambition of creating a collaborative and clear roadmap for the development of this sector in Wales. It's arguably one of the most important pieces of work FinTech Wales has done to date and

will secure Wales' place as a globally competitive place for fintech business.

We are very focussed on creating the right conditions in which to innovate and grow, where all the actors and organisations have both a responsibility and role to play as a part of a wider connected and interdependent system. It's very much the quality of this environment that will make Wales stand out globally. This coordinated approach demonstrates how progressive we are in this field and how we are at the forefront of locations for companies to start and scale operations and build resilience in this sector.”

FinTech Wales is now calling upon businesses across Wales to engage in the development of the roadmap and help identify the requirement of future skills, likely market disruptors and changes that need to be made to make Wales a proactive and innovative business environment that generates growth.

**FinTech Wales member Matt Wintle, who is Head of Change at Admiral Group, said:**

“I fully support the creation of a fintech roadmap, we should be immensely proud of the fintech community in South Wales. We have some great companies enjoying huge success largely powered by their technology capabilities. We now have a wonderful opportunity to be proactive in our development of the sector and the talent which supports it. I see every reason Wales can be a centre of technology excellence in areas such as analytics and digital, if we can just be a little more organised and forward thinking, and to shout about how proud we are of what we already achieve.”

**Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales, Ken Skates, said:**

“The publication of the FinTech Road-Map is the latest milestone on the

journey to creating a financial and professional services environment in Wales with a reputation for excellence and a growing pool of talent.

The tech sector is hugely important to Wales, with employment in it soaring by more than 120% in recent years and will be even more so as we recover from the impacts of coronavirus. Our flourishing fintech ecosystem is central to this.

The Welsh Government continues to support this thriving industry and our commitment to helping home grown business while attracting internationally-renowned companies to Wales is steadfast, helping to provide more high-quality and well-paid job opportunities.

With the support of FinTech Wales we are creating a truly world class industry here, and that is something we should all be extremely proud of.”

Founded in 2019 as a not-for-profit, FinTech Wales exists as a global voice for Welsh-based fintech and financial services. As well as nurturing and supporting those businesses already in Wales, it will develop the environment to help fintech companies' start-up or scale-up in Wales and aims to establish Wales as a rapidly emerging pillar of the global fintech economy.

The association has established an advisory board of 20 people including representation from Welsh companies such as Credas, Confused.com, Admiral, The Principality and Capital Law. FinTech Wales will act as a global voice and advocate for fintech, introducing the benefits to fintech entrepreneurs and innovators of establishing a business in Wales, as well as nurturing and supporting those companies already in Wales.

**More information about taking part in the roadmap development can be found at: [www.fintechwales.org](http://www.fintechwales.org)**

# Cardiff Capital Region's Role in the Western Gateway

Stretching from Swansea to Swindon, the Western Gateway is the latest initiative to boost the regional economy of South Wales and the west of England – and Cardiff Capital Region is right at the heart of it.

The Western Gateway is the one of a number of such regional initiatives across the UK, with others including the Northern Powerhouse, the Midlands Engine and England's Economic Heartland. Like them it seeks to combine the efforts of local authorities and other regional partners to propel economic development on a larger, regional scale.

It began with talks between the leaders of Cardiff, Bristol and Newport in 2016, but has since evolved to include many other regional figures. As one of the 3 city regions within the area, Cardiff Capital Region would play a central role if it decided to get involved.

Currently CCR is committed to further discussions about the role and purpose of the Western Gateway, and how it will fit with the objectives of the City Deal, particularly as regards geographic spread. From this perspective, it's important to ensure that any benefits are not confined to the M4 corridor but are fairly distributed around the whole region.

Katherine Bennett, chair of the Western Gateway and senior vice president UK of Airbus, describes the Western Gateway as "a powerhouse waiting to happen... ready to capitalise on its phenomenal potential to drive Britain's cleaner, fairer future."

## Regional Scale

Certainly, the Western Gateway has a lot going for it. It encompasses 8 cities and 3 city regions, and has a population of 4.4 million. The region's £107 billion economy supports 2.1 million jobs.

It is crisscrossed by 4 major transport lines, including the M4 and M5 and the Great Western Mainline. It also has 2 international airports and 9 ports, supporting its ambition to become Britain's gateway to global markets.

And it has 10 universities, which support innovation in key sectors such as advanced manufacturing and engineering, digital and cyber security, and finance and professional services.

## Three Ambitions

The prospectus for the Western Gateway sets out three ambitions, and how the regional partnership hopes to achieve them. First is to deliver world class physical and digital connectivity, both within and into the region, to boost productivity, unlock housing, and lead the transition to a net zero future.

It aims to boost travel within the region by linking up regional metro systems such as the South Wales Metro, as well as improving connections with neighbouring powerhouse regions such as England's Economic Heartland.

Boosting exports is the second ambition. The Western Gateway vision is to become Britain's 21st century gateway to the world. It plans to make the most of the region's 2 deep sea ports and international airports to increase exports.

But it also plans to make the region the gateway into Britain for inward investment, by making use of the world leading companies and world class research universities that are already present in the area.

The third ambition is to make the region a powerhouse for innovation, to meet the challenges and create the new industries of the 21st century. The area is home to innovative companies such as SPTS, IQE, Renishaw, Airbus and BAE Systems, as well as research intensive universities such as Bath, Bristol, Cardiff and Swansea.

“ There is particular potential for the development of renewable energy systems, ultra-low emission vehicles, low carbon propulsion systems and lightweight structures for cars and aircraft. There are

also opportunities for innovation in the digital, cyber and creative industries.

Centred on the cities of Cardiff and Bristol, Western Gateway already has an economic performance that is higher than most other UK regions, apart from London. But it also has areas of deprivation, and the region as a whole could do better.

If it exported as much goods per worker as the Midlands Engine region in sectors such as aerospace, automotive, the digital, cyber and creative industries, life sciences and low carbon technologies, that would add £1.3 billion per year to the region's earnings. And if the Western Gateway spent as much per full-time employee on innovation as the English and Welsh average, spending up to 2030 would be £4.1 billion higher.

It's to address these disparities that the Western Gateway project is directed, using the combined resources of cities and communities on both sides of the Severn, from the Wiltshire Downs to the Gower, and from Salisbury to Merthyr Tydfil. As the prospectus puts it:

“ We will draw on our combined strengths and unique assets to unleash our full potential and blaze a trail for the UK's next generation economy: delivering a gateway to a cleaner, fairer and more prosperous future.”



## PODCAST

### Cardiff Capital Region – Lockdown to Delivery – Episode 2

Welcome to the second podcast in the series telling the ongoing story of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal as it emerges from lockdown into a new delivery phase.

In this episode Kellie Beirne Director of the CCCRD talks to us about:

- › Our need to build greater resilience and work collaboratively
- › The potential impact some of the recent sector investments e.g. CS Connected and Fintech, will have on the region
- › The new Challenge Fund and its objectives
- › The potential for new funding mechanisms to support SME's

We hope you find the recording informative and interesting. A written Q&A version will also be issued later this week.

**LISTEN/WATCH NOW**



## Cardiff Capital Region: Interview with Kellie Beirne

Kellie Beirne, Director of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, spoke with Mark Powney, MD at Business News Wales

**We've been through some turbulent times in the last few months with many businesses suffering the impacts. How have the Cardiff Capital Region's decision making and operations been affected?**

We've had 4 meetings of the Regional Cabinet, 4 meetings of the Investment Panel, 2 of our Economic Growth Partnership, 2 of our Regional Transport Authority, 1 of our Programme Board, 1 of our Compound Semiconductor Foundry Board.

The only reason we have those meetings is because we have important decisions on investment proposals that need to be taken forward. The rate and pace at which we've made those decisions, in order to keep up to speed with the real challenges on the ground, has been quite extraordinary.

**We understand the City Deal is a long game, but in the short term are the commitments to shared funding provided by government bodies and local authorities likely to be impacted?**

Of course health and wellbeing will always be the number one priority, but I think time and attention is starting to turn to the long-term economic impact. We're trying to make sure businesses can maximise what is there for them, but quickly we're going to be into building greater resilience.

When the economy starts to return to "normal" there are going to be some big questions to answer. Do we want the same economy as we had before? What about some of these behavioural changes

that have been thrust upon us, shouldn't we be doing more to keep some of those after lockdown?

**What would your response be to those who might challenge the case to continue to fund the City Deal investment activity?**

We have an opportunity to fundamentally reinvent our future; to think about the big issues that impact our region, like inequality. What better time to come together and work cohesively to inform that new future?

I won't accept throwaway remarks in this climate, it's not the time for them; it's time to come together and fundamentally think about the future that we want to create.

**There's been a lot of activity recently with a significant uplift in the pace of projects coming through the investment pipeline. Can you talk to us about some of these and the impact they might have on the ground, starting with CS Connected.**

CS Connected is really significant because it is an enabling technology. Next generation compound semiconductors are the technology you find in medtech devices, future energy systems, low emission vehicles, electric vehicle systems, 5G, communications.

Back in 2017 CCR invested in the compound semiconductor mega foundry in Newport. On the back of that, last September I took a report through to Regional Cabinet for a request we were making to the UK Government for £44m, £26m from UKRI, and the rest from partners. You will have seen in the press within the last week we are one of 7 regions in the whole of the UK that have been successful with that bid, which is massively significant for us. It is a huge boost to the region

What we have now with this £44m is 4 areas of unique competency we can build out in the region. One is a collaborative R&D programme which will maximise supply chains not just in Newport and Cardiff, but many areas in the region like Caerphilly, RCT, and Bridgend. Next is working with our Regional Skills Partnership, led by Leigh Hughes, thinking about how we build skills, not just the high-end graduates and PhDs, [but] apprenticeships.

Third is CS Connected, the trade body around compound semiconductors. Lastly, in the foundry we own in Newport, there will be a demonstration space and visitor centre.

**We've also seen seed funding for the fintech sector agreed, what will investing in this sector do for us in the longer term?**

*When we looked at our evidence base a couple of years ago, we saw potential for real comparative advantage in insurtech. We're seeing so much disruption in businesses now, using different platforms to appeal to a wider customer base. Think about what the future will bring if we maintain an element of social distancing, how we conduct business; e-commerce will be a massive part of that.*

*The innovations are coming really fast, they happen much more quickly than in any other sector I know. This isn't just about the big business dimension and scaling up traditional models of economic development. Think about the foundational economy, how models of retail will have to change; the role of the knowledge economy and technology in that is going to be absolutely critical.*

**We've seen funding for specific companies, especially in the medtech sector. Can you elaborate on those and the rationale behind those investments, and why they are good for the region?**

*We have a lot of medtech proposals at the moment. One we approved a few weeks ago is about creating a new diagnostic device which is going to be fundamental in the fight against Covid-19; it's got huge commercial opportunity. We turned it around really quickly because at this time it is critical when we see the right opportunities we can act fast to take advantage of them.*

*One of the things Cabinet approved recently is a Challenge Fund. The fundamental starting point is we're not setting off with a known here, the same old solution or process we want to undertake; we're setting off with a problem that needs to be solved, and there is no obvious solution or end point that currently exists.*

*We're hoping to make money available to people who think they can solve the problems of the public sector. We want to pick these around the foundational economy – food, retail, hospitality, tourism, public transport – because they're the sectors that are being hammered at the moment and will continue to be hammered for some time if you look at the ONS projections.*

*Instead of knowing what we want to achieve, the brilliance of this process is we don't know what we >*



can achieve. That's a new way of working that could be very exciting, and could be scaled up significantly beyond the initial £10m which Cabinet have given their approval to.

**You mentioned the Challenge Fund, can you elaborate on what sort of challenges we might expect to see over the next few months.**

There are several areas I've outlined: public transport, food security, retail and town centres, rapid decarbonisation; the things we really feel we have to have different solutions to right now in CCR.

We then get public bodies behind some of those key challenges, and then we go out to the market and say: this is the problem we want to solve, no obvious solution exists or we want to do it differently, who can work with us? We'd then help that business to potentially commercialise that solution so it could be scaled up beyond that initial end customer.

The effect is that we disrupt public procurement so it's more of a problem-led approach. It creates new markets from engaging new local businesses. It gives the end customer, the public service client, a much more innovative way of solving the problem. It's based on what is the problem we're trying to solve, who can work with us and come on a journey to solve that, rather than going through traditional beauty parades to get the same old products that don't really do the job.

**You recently announced the CCR's 10 priorities for addressing the impact of Covid-19. There's a lot of focus in that document on new funding interventions, but it also talks about the desire to support start-ups and entrepreneurs. Can you explain these priorities a bit more and how we can better support starts?**

We recognise start-ups are responsible for the majority of new job creation. One of the things Cabinet approved was a Strategic Premises Fund, another was a cluster fund for SMEs so that we can support our key clusters. We also spoke about different funding mechanisms that we are going to need to be able to deploy.

At the moment we take an evergreen fund approach. We have a strong desire to create returns on investment that continue to be reinvested to build real resilience in the CCR. We recognise, with "patient capital" being a very real need for some of our medium-

sized businesses, we're going to have to think about equity products potentially: convertible equity, loan guarantees, securitisation, and collateral backing.

We never wanted a fund which was about spending down the capital; this is about living off the interest and making sure we have the ability to recycle and reinvest funds to take a much longer-term approach.

**Fast forward 12 months, what would you hope you and your team have achieved, and what impact would you like to have created?**

We're only a few years in, but we have 24 live projects in train now. Not all will succeed; some will naturally fall out as we work through our due diligence processes.

The Housing Fund is up and running, I'm hopeful we'll see early signs in the market around sites that are currently non-viable. The Strategic Premises Fund will be up and running in a year's time, as will our Cluster Fund with our build-out around compound semiconductors.

With our Graduate Scheme, even in this climate we're finding fantastic opportunities and organisations that want to work with us in medtech in particular. They're taking on testing staff and we have graduates ready with those skills to fit into those positions. Our Challenge Fund will be up and running and we'll be working with multiple businesses on solving those big industrial and societal problems.

In terms of medtech businesses, their products will be hitting the market, localising those supply chains, because our reliance on overseas supply chains when we have the ingredients and conditions in CCR can be quite frustrating.



**FRANK HOLMES**

**HOW DOES CARDIFF CAPITAL  
REGION RECOVER FROM COVID-  
19'S ECONOMIC IMPACT?**



# How Does Cardiff Capital Region Recover from Covid-19's Economic Impact?



The economic consequences of Covid-19, and more particularly the Government's sweeping lockdown response to it, are now too well known to need repeating.

**Frank Holmes**

Chair CCR Economic Growth Partnership, Partner Gambit Corporate Finance

We don't yet have all the figures in to measure the full extent of the damage done, or know the amount of economic scarring that has taken place. We can't say how long the recession will last – whether it will be V-shaped (unlikely), U-shaped (as most people seem to think), W-shaped or even a very harsh L-shaped, recovering in 2023.

But we can – and must – think about how best we help stimulate the recovery. This was the purpose of a recent exercise by the UK Government, in which Business Secretary Alok Sharma invited prominent people in the business and economic community, members of the Government's Economic Recovery Taskforce, to think about promoting recovery and levelling up economic performance across the regions and nations of the UK. Our responses to the questions asked are set out below.

## Barriers to investment

One problem has been historically low levels of investment in R&D, and in Wales especially, the dependence on EU grant money to support science,

innovation and research. The UK Government is committed to boosting national R&D spending from 1.7% to 2.4% of GDP by 2027, but this will need a roadmap and some thinking about how Government agencies such as UK Research and Innovation allocate funds to achieve levelling up.

In general, we need to move away from funding one-off projects to promoting clusters and eco-systems, using tools such as the Strength in Places fund. In Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) our investments are focused on developing clusters in key sectors – compound semiconductors, medical devices and diagnostics, fintech, cyber data and AI, and creative.

We are looking to build sovereign capabilities in key industries of the future that are also underpinning and enabling technologies. Compound semiconductors are a good example, because as well as being an important sector in their own right they are essential to advanced medtech, new energy systems, ultra-low emission vehicles, 5G and digital communications.

## Government and business working together

Leveraging the investment already being stimulated by devices such as Cardiff Capital Region City Deal can help government and business identify meaningful opportunities for investment. In CCR, our Industrial and Economic Growth Plan is both evidence based and business led, and has framed a growth strategy that can call upon a £495m investment fund.

One of the key principles is that it is an 'evergreen' fund, which demands a return on investment in order to build self-reliance rather than creating dependency. This sits with our belief that government needs to become more entrepreneurial, and move into the territory of accepting risk for reward rather than doling out grants.

This is facilitated by the distributed leadership we have in the CCR. The Regional Cabinet comprises the political leaders of our 10 constituent local authorities; they have accountability and responsibility for policy decisions. But they are assisted by our private sector-led Economic Growth Partnership, who assess all investment proposals and advise the Regional Cabinet.

## No single priority

There is no single priority that is more important for government and business to work towards in order to level up regional economies, because they are all complementary. If you wanted to promote medtech, for example, you would have to look at skills, digital and physical connectivity, R&D, energy security, strategic premises and so on, because all are necessary to developing a resilient medtech cluster.

The same is true of clusters and ecosystems in other sectors. Ultimately they overlap and complement each other, and it is a mistake to separate them out into silos and think one is more important than another. That being said, Covid-19 has proved the critical importance of good digital connectivity, and in the immediate term 5G and digital infrastructure is a priority.

Something we are pursuing in CCR is the use of Challenge Funds to stimulate both more innovative public services and local economic markets. There are plenty of future challenges that we need to face – an ageing population, clean growth, mobility, AI – that require the input of innovative companies which all too often fall by the wayside because of their inability to access public procurement.

FE colleges can better provide the skills business need if they are given three-year rolling commissions, which would give them greater certainty and allow them the confidence to develop new courses. As for universities, regional funds and joint investment programmes could help them invest in new courses, as with Cardiff University's National Software Academy established with help from Welsh Government, and Cardiff Metropolitan's new School of Technologies providing degrees in software engineering, coding and digital analytics.

## Strengthening public support

The CCR model of a Regional Cabinet assisted by a private sector led Economic Growth Partnership combines democratic legitimacy and accountability with expert advice and insight. That sort of public-private collaboration will play a big part in the recovery.

Regional bodies such as CCR should be free to carve out their own paths without initiatives being imposed from outside. At the same time, regional disparities and inequalities will widen further unless there is some consistency in regional investment frameworks. There is also a need to make sure our public officials are of the calibre to face the challenges of the 2020s and beyond.

Finally, we need to move away from over-reliance on traditional economic metrics such as productivity to embrace other economic, social, and environmental measurements including wellbeing and wellness. In the CCR and the UK generally, the recovery cannot be about prosperity only, it must be about shared prosperity.

The economic shock of Covid-19 has been severe; the recovery is uncertain. We must use all the devices and ingenuity we have to make sure it is not just swift, but lasting and sustainable. This will require collaboration by all stakeholders, including government at all levels, academia, social enterprise and business.

# £25.4m Funding for CS Connected Huge Boost to the Cardiff Capital Region

The UK Government has announced £25.4m in funding to CSConnected, a major project within the Compound Semiconductor Cluster (CSC) in the Cardiff Capital Region.

This funding represents a huge boost to the Cardiff Capital Region and reinforces its strategic focus on compound semiconductors.

The funding comes through UK Research and Innovation's Strength in Places Fund and amounts to more than half the £43.7m project cost. Other funding will come from the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, Welsh Government, Cardiff and Swansea Universities, IQE, SPTS, NWF, Microsemi, the CS Centre and the CS Catapult.

Compound semiconductors (CS) are at the heart of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal's strategy of building a more competitive, connected and resilient regional economy, built upon the sunrise industries of the future and creating the wealth to underpin shared prosperity and future growth.

The CSConnected project is based around integrating research excellence from the region's universities with the region's unique supply chains in advanced semiconductor manufacturing.

Compound semiconductors are critical components across a wide range of new technologies, and the primary aim of the CSconnected project is to develop a competitive advantage in key enabling technologies, which will allow the UK to increase trade globally in critical sectors such as communications, 5G, autonomous and electric vehicles, and medical devices.

CSConnected will also provide further downstream supply chain growth, start-up and spinout activity, and a general upskilling of the Welsh manufacturing base.

In economic impact terms, it is expected to provide a significant additional uplift to regional GVA over organic growth forecasts, delivering more than 1,000 additional high value jobs in the regional supply chain from 2025 onwards.

Cardiff Capital Region City Deal is investing £37.9m in acquiring and equipping the Compound Semiconductor Foundry in Newport, which is leased to IQE. This will help leverage up to £400m of private investment over the life of the project, to drive forward expansion and anchor the sector in the region.

**The investment in the Foundry sits alongside £270m of strategically significant CS investments and assets already made in the region, which include:**

- › *the Institute of Compound Semiconductors – which focuses on early stage R&D and is a partnership between IQE, Welsh Government and Cardiff University;*
- › *the CSC Centre for Excellence – focusing on prototyping and a partnership with IQE and Cardiff University;*
- › *applications-based Catapult Centre – led by Innovate UK and located at IQE's mega foundry in Newport;*
- › *Centre for Integrative Semiconductor Materials – a materials foundry at Swansea University.*

**Simon Hart, Secretary of State for Wales said:**

“ Our £44 million investment in the Cardiff University led project will boost the incredible research that is already taking place in this field across south-east Wales.

*Investing in this emerging technology will enable us to create a lasting engineering and manufacturing legacy in Wales, generating high-skilled jobs and economic growth as we emerge from the coronavirus emergency.”*

**Cllr Anthony Hunt, chair of the Cardiff Capital Region Regional Cabinet, said:**

“ We are building a world first here – a global cluster in the CS sector. This is an industry of the future and is significant in supporting growth in telecoms, 5G, communications, future energy systems, future automotive and med-tech.

*We are also building sovereign technological capability here in our midst. In the wake of Covid-19 we have been discussing the importance of localised supply chains. This will see us re-localise this significant high value supply chain and keep the benefits in the region, Wales and the UK.*

*And crucially, this is significant for the whole of Cardiff Capital Region. While there may be a focus on Cardiff, Newport and Swansea as the centres of the cluster and home to the universities, the supply chains, high skilled workers and PhDs come from right across the region.”*

**Kellie Beirne, Director of Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, said:**

“ This is an outstanding achievement against the backdrop of significant economic challenge – it is a symbol of hope in the opportunity that lies ahead. The CSConnected bid was one of 23 to be selected in the initial phase in March 2019. Following seed corn investment by Research England and Innovate UK, we submitted a business plan and now know we are one of seven successful bids across the UK.

*It is a real testament to the Regional Cabinet for backing the industrial cluster approach, which is recognition of both key business sectors and the importance of place.*

*There will always be headwinds and cross currents in any commercial investment*

*– we've had some and can expect more given the times we are in. But the Regional Cabinet has backed this, stood firm and not deviated. This sense of purpose and perseverance when it would be easy to be all things to all people is to be commended.”*

**Councillor Jane Mudd, Leader of Newport City Council, said:**

“ I am immensely proud that Newport is home to the next generation compound semi-conductor cluster of cutting-edge technology companies who are leading the way in this important field.

*I welcome this significant investment as a ringing endorsement of their innovative work. In the past, Newport's economy was built on the industrial revolution, so it is fitting that its present and future is being forged by a technological revolution as we continue to develop the city as a digital hub.”*



# Cardiff Capital Region and GlobalWelsh Enter a New Partnership Arrangement

The Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) and GlobalWelsh has joined forces to form a new partnership to promote the region on a global level and facilitate economic prosperity and social wellbeing for Wales.

GlobalWelsh is a not-for-profit organisation focused on connecting Wales to the Welsh diaspora around the world to enable Wales and the people of Wales to excel and prosper. Through the building of a global community on GlobalWelsh Connect, its aim is to facilitate the creation of new connections, new insights, and new opportunities for its members located in more than 40 countries. GlobalWelsh's initiatives and programmes are focused on having a positive economic impact on Wales and its members around the world through the facilitation of investment, trade, networking, mentoring, and learning opportunities.

As part of CCR's drive to connect Wales to an international audience, the new partnership aims to work collaboratively on the joint ambition to promote the Welsh south east region to drive economic growth and to connect to diaspora around the world. It will also aim to support the ambition to help CCR entrepreneurs and SME's build successful businesses that can face the future with confidence.

The initial plans of the partnership are detailed below:

## 1. Support for CCR SME Business sector

Utilising GlobalWelsh's MyMentor Global Mentoring programme, the partnership will offer business mentoring services for free to all companies that currently participate in the CCR Graduate Scheme.

Under these exclusive arrangements, both the business leader and the graduate involved will be offered the opportunity to connect with a diaspora mentor for a period of 12 months.

By linking the benefit to graduate recruitment, the CCR is looking to provide added support to those businesses who are seeking to take on new skills to help them adapt to the new economic reality.

## 2. Robust Research

As part of the mentoring arrangement, the CCR recipients will be invited to participate in a qualitative research exercise that aims to quantify the benefit of diaspora networking and mentoring on the performance of individuals and businesses.

This research will help inform future decisions on the provision of networking and mentoring support for SMEs within the CCR.

## 3. City Hubs

As part of the new partnership, two new city hubs will be set-up in Dublin and the USA. The city hubs, which will work similar to the existing GlobalWelsh city hubs, will help reconnect people with Wales, connect like-minded individuals and promote far and wide that the CCR is open for business and is a truly investable region. GlobalWelsh currently has city hubs in several global locations, such as London, Beijing, Tokyo and Dublin.

**Walter May, founder and CEO of GlobalWelsh, said:**

“ Like us, Cardiff Capital Region is an economically focused organisation looking to have a positive impact on people, businesses and future prosperity here in

Wales. Our activities and ambitions align very well so we are extremely excited to announce this partnership and embark on the opportunity to have a more tangible impact across the region through our joint activities.”

**Kellie Beirne, Director CCR City Deal, said:**

“ I am delighted to partner with GlobalWelsh. This is a partnership where we have true alignment of purpose and values, and the huge scope for potential future collaboration is genuinely exciting.

The areas we have identified for initial working enable us to start to address, in a unique way, a few of the objectives in our recently published 'CCR Post Covid-19 10 priorities' – most notably on ensuring entrepreneurs, start-ups and SME's get the support they need through facilitating access to expertise, including mentor programmes and networking groups, and the sharing of best practice advice and guidance. In addition, the ability to increase opportunities to market the CCR to potential inward investors on a global stage is now more important than ever.

I look forward to developing our working relationship and to making it a truly rewarding partnership arrangement for all parties.”

GlobalWelsh is a not-for-profit organisation focused on connecting Wales to the Welsh diaspora around the world to enable Wales and the people of Wales to excel and prosper.

