# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Publication of “The Valleys Taskforce, 2016-2021: a final report’** |
| **DATE**  | **22 March 2021** |
| **BY** | **Lee Waters, Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport** |

Today, I am publishing a final report on the work of the Valleys Taskforce programme as it draws to a close at the end of this Senedd term. The report provides an honest reflection of the last five years, celebrating the great progress made in some areas, whilst sharing some of the challenges we have faced in others.

One of the first things I did when I became the chair of the taskforce two years ago was to look across the Valleys for existing good practice to share. Building upon the extensive programme of open meetings and consultation that my colleague Alun Davies MS and other Ministers undertook, I held meetings with all local authority leaders in the taskforce area where I asked them to identify successful initiatives that had originated in their areas. We were keen to identify those that could make a real difference and be delivered quickly across neighbouring authorities.

You will see more information on the progress made throughout this report and I am extremely proud of the impact those actions have made within communities in a relatively short space of time. Some of the highlights include:

* £12m invested in to the Empty Homes Scheme. Over 600 applications have been received, helping bring empty properties back in to use across the Valleys.
* £7m invested to develop 12 Discovery Gateways across the Valleys, helping the Valleys Regional Park go from strength to strength.
* £75K invested in the development of a pilot Alumni scheme for 10 secondary schools in the Valleys Taskforce area. 230 alumni are working with Careers Wales to develop networks with their former schools, offering help and guidance to pupils.
* £2.4m provided to support 27 experimental projects in the Valleys Taskforce area aimed at strengthening the Foundational Economy.

While there are many positives to be taken from the hard work undertaken so far, members of the Valleys Taskforce thought it important that any lessons gleaned from our experience should be captured and used to inform future approaches. As such, an independent review led by OB3 Research was commissioned by the Welsh Government where over 30 individuals were interviewed. An online survey of stakeholders was also administered directly by the Welsh Government. The reports of those findings have already been published.

As we have approached the end of this programme, I have been conscious of the need for the outputs of the taskforce to go well beyond this term of government. We have worked hard to embed our work in the long-term plans for the Welsh Government and via partnership working. The taskforce has discussed what we believe the strategic priorities should be for any future delivery programme to focus on, and a ministerial meeting was held to discuss where such a programme could sit within existing structures. These suggestions have been set out clearly for an incoming government to consider.

There is no denying that more needs to be done, and the challenges faced by the Valleys have only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This work cannot end here, the solutions lie within and require all of us to work closely together, with continued dedication to make a positive difference to every person living and working in the South Wales Valleys.

The Valleys Taskforce final report can be found at the following link, [https://gov.wales/valleys-taskforce-2016-2021-final-report](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fgov.wales%2Fvalleys-taskforce-2016-2021-final-report&data=04%7C01%7CRebecca.Janczewski%40gov.wales%7Cf11e59ce7d0043d1002108d8e46fc69a%7Ca2cc36c592804ae78887d06dab89216b%7C0%7C0%7C637510516000749279%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=AyYubTPKMoMbbihl2DDIM%2BgFq4u8EIE3JN1vz2rNKWI%3D&reserved=0)