

Lee Waters AC/AM
Dirprwy Weinidog yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

David J Rowlands AM
Assembly Member for South Wales East

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Dear David,

Thank you for your question to the Minister for Finance & Trefnydd during the Business Statement on 10 December. I am writing to you with an update on the work that has been going on in the Pontypool area and the work that is planned for the Pontypool area, in terms of supporting industry, innovation and employment and investment in the area.

Relationship Managers within the South East Regional Team are working closely with Torfaen County Borough Council to understand the issues within the Authority and to agree a joint plan of action for the future.

In relation to the work of the Valleys taskforce, there are a number of initiatives that we are taking forward over the next 18 months. On Thursday 28 November, I announced the publication of the annual update to Our Valleys, Our Future Delivery Plan. This outlines the actions that the Valleys taskforce are committed to deliver in its final phase of delivery in this Assembly term.

The Valleys taskforce recently provided £2.4 million to the £4.5 million Foundational Economy Challenge Fund to specifically support those projects based in the Valleys. Two projects are based in Torfaen. The Torfaen Voluntary Alliance will be awarded £95,000 to create an apprenticeship ecosystem within a Valleys community and Torfaen County Borough Council will be awarded £75,106 for business support and mentoring to small business start-ups.

The Valleys taskforce recently sponsored the Pitch It Valleys programme. Entrepreneurs applied to take part in the programme which resulted in a £75k investment prize for the winning pitch. The winner, Dog Furiendly based in Cwmbran, is a web platform and online community promoting dog-friendly restaurants and attractions.

As part of the work of the Valleys Regional Park, Blaenavon World Heritage Centre will be awarded £180,000 to install new interpretation facilities at the Centre, linking the site to wider Valleys facilities, highlighting its international importance and to promote local walking, cycling and community based activities which will also be improved using these funds.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The taskforce has been looking closely at how we can improve the outcomes for young people in our Valleys communities, increase their aspirations and promote entrepreneurship.

We are working with a group of entrepreneurs, small businesses and secondary schools to develop a suite of schemes that help young people to tap into local role models and alumni from their areas – to open up career paths they may not be aware of or didn't know how to access.

On 30 October I announced that the £10 million Empty Homes Grant Scheme is ready to begin delivery across the Valleys Taskforce boundary which includes Pontypool. All residents of Torfaen should the local authority choose to participate in the scheme, will be offered a grant of up to £20,000 to help bring empty properties back in to use. This scheme will contribute to the number of empty homes currently in the Valleys taskforce areas, as well as supporting the foundational economy through encouraging the work generated from these grants to be offered to local businesses.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lee', with a long vertical stroke extending upwards from the start of the name.

Lee Waters AC/AM

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