

*For information*

**Report on use of additional remit letter 2017-18 funding  
for research, innovation and engagement projects**

Agenda: 23  
**HEFCW/19/89**

Disclosable

**19/09/2019**

**1 Issue**

- 1.1 This paper provides an update on on-going activity, and finalised outcomes, for the research, innovation and engagement projects which were announced in the amendment to the [2017-18 HEFCW remit letter](#).

**2 Rationale for paper**

- 2.1 HEFCW received a revised remit letter for financial year 2017-18 from the Welsh Government which included ring-fenced amounts – to encourage universities to develop activities relating to their civic mission; to increase collaboration between higher education (HE) and further education (FE); and to provide capital investment enabling institutions to directly leverage additional external competitive match funding, or allow them to participate in high-value UK-wide projects, or to leverage or enhance funding from internal sources.

**3 Recommendation**

- 3.1 The Council is invited to:
- i. Note the update on activities supported through this additional income in relation to Civic Mission and HE-FE Collaboration, and outcomes of the completed Research and Innovation Capital projects.

**4 Timing for decisions**

- 4.1 There are no timing issues arising from this paper.

**5 Council members' interests**

- 5.1 No conflicts of interests have been declared in advance of the meeting.

**6 Further information**

- 6.1 Contact Emma Morris (029 2085 9664; [emma.morris@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:emma.morris@hefcw.ac.uk)).

## 7 Background

- 7.1 A supplementary revision to HEFCW's financial year 2017-18 remit letter notified the Council of additional funding which would be made available in year by the Welsh Government. A proportion of this additional funding was provided to support the following Research and Innovation activities:
- £1.8m to encourage universities to further develop activities related to their civic mission;
  - £1.2m to support the involvement of Welsh universities in the establishment of an Institute for Coding, including £0.2m to enable civic mission activity supporting coding initiatives in schools, colleges, work-based learning providers and universities;
  - £3m to improve and increase collaboration between HE and FE, as reforms progress in the post-compulsory education and training sector<sup>1</sup>;
  - £5.9m of capital funding to fund projects aimed at directly leveraging external competitive match funding, or to allow HEIs in Wales to participate in high-value UK-wide projects, or to leverage or enhance funding from internal sources.
- 7.2 Some further information on each of these funded areas is outlined below, and [this HEFCW visualisation](#) gives details on each scheme including project details, partners (where applicable), and funding levels. Similar information is available [on HEFCW's website](#) in spreadsheet format.

## 8 Civic Mission

- 8.1 Institutions were provided with £1.8m to encourage further development of activities relating to their civic mission. From this sum £0.2m was pre-allocated to support a pan-Wales Physics Mentoring programme led by Cardiff University. The remaining £1.6m was allocated in support of universities strategies for enhancing civic mission and community engagement as set out in HEFCW circular [W18/07HE Enhancing civic mission and community engagement](#).
- 8.2 Detailed plans for the use of this funding were submitted and agreed by HEFCW. Across the sector, plans outlined 35 distinct projects supporting over 50 activities ranging from choirs for the homeless, and school governor initiatives, to providing space and mentoring for student and graduate start-ups. Aligned to this HEFCW's [Innovation Nation - On Common Ground](#) 2018 publication broadcast more widely successful civic mission activities and interventions undertaken by Welsh institutions.

## 9 Collaboration between HE and FE

- 9.1 HEFCW provided £3.5m to improve and increase collaboration between HE and FE, as outlined in [W18/06HE Enhancing HE-FE collaboration in innovation and engagement activity](#). Competitive collaborative proposals were invited from institutions across Wales aimed at enhancing collaboration between HE and FE in innovation and engagement activities. Funding was only made available to pump-prime new activity or add value to existing activity.

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<sup>1</sup> To note, an additional £0.5m was added to this from HEFCW's existing 2017-18 budget.

9.2 In total seven projects were approved from across the three Welsh regions outlined in the [Welsh Government's Economic Action Plan – Prosperity For All](#). Each project is led by a Welsh higher education institution. In the case of the South East Wales region, the University of South Wales leads of programme partnering with Cardiff University, Cardiff Metropolitan, the Open University in Wales, and all other FE Institutions in the region.

## **10 Initial Monitoring – Civic Mission and HE-FE Collaboration**

10.1 HEFCW requested the submission of progress reports relating to project deliverables for both Civic Mission and HE-FE Collaboration be submitted in March 2019. Given projects had only commenced in July 2018, monitoring was intended to ensure activities were on track, and to allow for discussions where institutions had encountered delays or issues. Once monitoring reports were agreed HEFCW would be in position to approve the payment of the final tranche of funding.

10.2 Following assessment of the returns HEFCW requested further information in relation to seven of the Civic Mission reports. Mostly these queries related to minor clarifications but it was agreed that two institutions (Swansea and Cardiff Universities) would need to submit revised Civic Mission plans. In both cases one or more projects were considered unlikely to achieve agreed outcomes and permission was sought to either move funds to add value to previously agreed projects, or to invest in new civic activities. Both institutions were able to submit plans with amendments which met the criteria under which funding was made available ensuring optimum outputs during the funding timeframe. Whilst discussions were ongoing funding was withheld from both institutions but has now been released. Projects will be monitored for the final time in March 2020. Examples of ongoing Civic Mission and Community Engagement projects can be found at **Annex A**.

10.3 Having assessed the HE-FE Collaboration monitoring returns HEFCW requested further information from three projects. One request was very minor relating to a clarification. For two universities (Bangor and Swansea) funding was temporarily halted due to issues over progress. Meetings were held with both institutions to understand more clearly the delays. Swansea University had encountered delays in releasing funding centrally which had a knock-on effect to progress. HEFCW was kept regularly updated over a course of months and the project is now back on track and funding released. It was agreed that the project will extend slightly beyond the original timeframe to ensure all targets are met.

10.4 At Bangor the decision by Hitachi to halt developments at Wylfa Newydd was potentially more challenging given the project is centred on meeting skills needs within the Nuclear Industry. Consideration was given to changing the focus of the project but ultimately Bangor was able to provide assurance that the plans to meet skills needs in this area continued to be required particularly given that work in Trawsfynydd remained ongoing. It was concluded that HEFCW funding would continue to build capacity and capability at Bangor / Grŵp Llandrillo Menai. This would increase the likelihood of future external investment, and enable Bangor and Grŵp Llandrillo Menai to meet changing industry skills requirements. This matched HEFCW's rationale for funding the project and as such the final tranche of funding has been released to Bangor.

10.5 HE-FE Collaboration projects will be monitored for the final time in March 2020. Brief information and updates on the projects can be found at **Annex B**.

## **11 Research and Innovation Capital 2017-18**

- 11.1 In November 2017 HEFCW invited universities to submit expressions of interest for HEFCW capital investment against criteria established by Welsh Government. In February 2018 we requested fully worked-up proposals from five bids judged to have met the Welsh Government criteria. All projects had to ensure that they would either directly leverage external competitive match funding, or allow HEIs in Wales to participate in high-value UK-wide projects, or that proposals would leverage or enhance funding from internal sources.
- 11.2 HEFCW also requested that the Institute of Coding in Wales, led by Swansea University and earmarked by Welsh Government for £1.2m, submit an application using the same process. This ensured HEFCW was satisfied that appropriate financial /deliverable monitoring procedures were in place prior to the release of funding. This funding enabled the involvement of Welsh universities in the already established Institute of Coding (IoC); providing substantial capital support and a further £0.2m to enable civic mission activity in schools, colleges, work-based learning providers, and universities.
- 11.3 In March 2018 HEFCW Council approved providing a further £95,000 from unallocated cash reserves in order to meet the revised total cost of these Capital projects.
- 11.4 Projects proved very successful at leveraging in additional funding, and/or creating formal links to UK-wide projects. They were monitored for the final time in March 2019 and a summary of outcomes is attached at **Annex C**. To note most funding was used to build capacity, or to support on-going capital projects. However, the Institute of Coding, as noted above, was included under the processes for this fund to ensure appropriate financial / deliverable monitoring. As such the Institute of Coding outcomes are detailed as they relate to the specific activities of one project.

## **12 Future developments**

- 12.1 In March 2019 HEFCW approved an in principle £15m to support innovation and engagement activity in Wales through a new Research Wales Innovation Fund (RWIF). It has been agreed that in order to access this funding institutions must submit, and have approved, three year RWIF strategies. These strategies will be required to align to HEFCW's [Research and Innovation: the Vision for Wales](#), which contains specific focus on civic mission, HE-FE collaboration, and meeting the skills needs of Wales.

## **13 Financial implications**

- 13.1 There are no financial implications arising from this paper.

## **14 Communications implications**

- 14.1 There are no communication implications arising from this paper.

## **15 Diversity and Equal Opportunities implications**

- 15.1 This paper is provided for information and there are no implications for age, disability, marital/civil partnership, maternity/pregnancy, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, any other protected characteristic or Welsh Language.

## 16 Risk Assessment

Risk	Action to address risk
If project outcomes / expenditure are not monitored HEFCW will not be confident that WG remit letter aims have been met, and may have concern regarding the use of public funding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Detailed deliverables and expenditure breakdowns have been received for all projects.</li><li>• Monitoring has / will take place twice during the life of each fund to ensure targets are met and that HEFCW has oversight of financials.</li><li>• Reports will be presented to Council on impact and outcomes.</li></ul>