

Alun Davies in town to learn from new Neath Valleys hub

Since the taskforce was set up, it has worked closely with people living and working in the Valleys to find out what they want for their communities and what they believe the opportunities and challenges are.

Our Valleys Our Future, the recently published plan setting out the actions to deliver the priorities of the Taskforce, identified the need for seven strategic hubs across the Valleys. It is hoped the hubs will become areas of focused public investment and will attract private sector capital and investment, creating jobs and opportunities for the local area.

The Cabinet Secretary has been visiting each of the seven strategic hubs to discuss with local stakeholders the work of the taskforce, as well as the shape of the sites and how local authorities, businesses and other key stakeholders can play a role in lifting the prosperity of the area.

Speaking following the meeting at Neath's Civic Centre, Alun Davies said,

"This was an excellent opportunity for all those responsible for delivering our priorities to get together and share valuable knowledge and ideas. I am confident that working in this way can help us identify the priority projects which will form the first part of the new stage of Neath's ongoing economic regeneration.

"It is vital we continue to engage with communities, like our partners in Neath, to make sure each of these hubs meets the unique needs of the local area."

As well as Neath, hubs will be created in Merthyr, Caerphilly, Pontypridd, Ebbw Vale, Cwmbran and northern Bridgend.

Between now and April, the taskforce will be working with local authorities and stakeholders to identify those projects which can be funded and delivered in the first phase of development in each of the strategic hub sites by 2021.

The taskforce aims to ensure that businesses, employers and entrepreneurs are aware of the different types of support available to help them to grow and to boost the local economy.

The Cabinet Secretary said he wanted to close the employability gap between the Valleys and the rest of Wales by helping some 7,000 people who are unemployed or economically inactive into work.