



# Carmarthenshire

## Local Development Strategy for Rural Carmarthenshire

### Summary Document



## **Introduction**

*The local development strategy for rural Carmarthenshire provides a framework for the sustainable regeneration of the rural economy. The strategy provides an overarching framework for the implementation of the Rural Development Plan (2014-2020); the new Structural Investment Funds (2014-2020) and other funding streams that will be made available to rural parts of the County over the period.*

*The strategy sets out a partnership approach to tackling key challenges that are hindering employment and prosperity growth in rural Carmarthenshire and is driven by the priorities of the South West Wales Economic Regeneration Strategy (SWWERS). With rural areas accounting for more than 60% of the County's population, the rural economy has an important part to play in achieving the goals of the County's wider Regeneration Strategy.*

*Considerable progress has been achieved over the last 7 years under the Rural Development Plan (2007-13); however a number of challenges still remain that require a multi agency approach to ensure maximum impact is achieved. This strategy sets out how we aim to achieve our vision.*

**Wendy Walters**

**Chair of Grwp Cefn Gwlad**





## SWOT Analysis of Rural Carmarthenshire

### Strengths

- High quality of Life
- Low crime rate/perception of crime
- Diverse and rich local cultural and heritage
- Highest number of Welsh speakers in Wales (43%)
- Strong sense of community
- Impressive natural environment and biodiversity
- High Educational Attainment
- Proximity to M4 and major trunk roads through county
- Developed agricultural community
- Many sites of special scientific interest (SSSI)
- Strong food sector
- Strong FE/HE links
- Strong arts and crafts sector
- Good sporting culture
- High number of repeat visitors

### Weaknesses

- Growth in GVA is consistently lower than that of Wales and UK
- Sectoral mix of the economy is geared towards lower value sectors and occupations
- Continuing decline in productivity
- Confusion in the market place in relation to business support
- Viability of services in rural areas
- Relatively low income levels compared to rest of Wales
- Maintenance of trunk roads affecting maintenance of primary roads
- Lack of building space to support business growth
- Reluctance of microenterprises to expand
- Poor footpath/ cycle/ bridleway routes
- Shoulder months – reduced tourism
- Weather dependent tourism – need to have an offer that makes Carmarthenshire distinctive
- Grant dependency
- Insufficient people with higher level skills
- High level of economic inactivity
- Poor transport connectivity in many areas
- High level self-employed
- Widespread but hidden poverty
- Limited number of apprenticeships
- Limited food processing in food sector and no food production courses in FE/HE



### Opportunities

- Expand and enhance tourism sector
- Partnership working
- Harnessing technology opportunities
- Farm Diversification
- Tailor education and develop skills required to help business growth
- Expand roll out of apprenticeship scheme to new sectors
- Capitalise on relocation of S4C – opportunity for supply chain
- Developing renewable energy sites and projects
- Cross Hands Strategic Employment site & Food Park
- Make best use of third sector to outsource services
- Expand existing and create new employment sites
- High level of self employed people
- Distinctive market towns
- Superfast broadband by 2016
- Maximise value of IT – as location becomes less significant
- Wealth of volunteers
- Changes in patterns of public services delivery / assets transfer
- Utilise potential of strong, resourceful micro-business / self employment base – via networks, supply chains, opportunity development etc.
- Develop new ways of utilising community facilities while enabling them to become more self-sustaining

### Threats

- Decline of Welsh Language and loss of local identity
- High dependency on Public Sector organisations for key services
- Carmarthenshire is seen as gateway to Pembrokeshire, with visitors by-passing Carmarthenshire
- Rail Electrification only as far as Swansea with no firm plans to improve lines from Swansea further West
- Short term grants/funding
- Farm subsidy reductions
- Older and ageing population putting pressure on public services
- Over reliance on lower value added sectors such as agriculture which are vulnerable to external factors
- Talent drain unless high quality jobs are created



## **Strategic aims and objectives**

The high level strategic aims of the LDS are noted below:

### **Strategic aim 1: To support business growth, retention & specialisation**

Rural Carmarthenshire is predominantly made up of a large number of small and micro-businesses which are pivotal to the sustainability of the local economy. Traditional sectors such as agriculture have been joined by tourism, education, health and creative industries as the backbone of the rural economy. Much of the established business base does not fall into the high growth category, many of which are family owned. That does not mean that these businesses have no growth potential or that they are not important to us. Our goal is therefore to attract, develop and retain a larger stock of sustainable businesses; higher value and more productive businesses and a bigger cohort of SMEs that are geared to rapid growth.

The LAG will therefore seek to deliver against the higher level aim by:

- *Providing tailored business advice and support for retention and growth;*
- *Increasing job opportunities by supporting employment growth within indigenous businesses;*
- *Enhancing the resilience of indigenous employers;*
- *Increasing the productivity, diversity, efficiency and growth of farming, forestry, tourism, food and creative sectors, and support new entrants into these sectors.*
- *Developing a more entrepreneurial culture.*

### **Strategic aim 2: to support a skilled and ambitious workforce**

Developing a thriving and sustainable economy with higher value employment will necessitate an improvement in local skill levels, such that local people of all ages can offer the skills and knowledge that local businesses need. To achieve this there is a need to up-skill the existing workforce to meet more challenging future business requirements and to ensure young people leave education suitably qualified for and informed about future employment opportunities. Activities will be aligned to the Regional Delivery Plan for Employment & Skills for South West & Central Wales.

The LAG will therefore seek to deliver against the higher level aim by:

- *Improving attainment and ambition;*
- *Ensuring education provision is aligned to and shaped by employer needs.*

### **Strategic aim 3: to seek to maximise job creation and employment prospects**

The rate of unemployment across the working age population has remained stable over recent years however projections indicate that the trajectory of economic recovery and growth will follow a pattern of jobless growth. This is further compounded by the fact that a fairly high proportion of working age population is classed as being economically inactive. In response, the aim of the strategy is to increase the availability and accessibility of sustainable employment opportunities,



The LAG will therefore seek to deliver against the higher level aim by:

- *Supporting economically inactive back into work;*
- *Promoting and facilitating local enterprise development.*

#### **Strategic aim 4: to support the development of a knowledge economy**

The region as a whole has a relatively low proportion of its employment in knowledge intensive businesses. This is further pronounced in rural areas of Carmarthenshire. In order to develop a thriving and sustainable economy, we need to invest further in the application of new technologies to ensure that our local businesses are able to compete in wider markets.

The LAG will therefore seek to deliver against the higher level aim by:

- *Supporting and encouraging greater take up and application of new technologies amongst SMEs;*
- *Strengthening links between SMEs and research facilities.*

#### **Strategic aim 5: to develop the distinctiveness and attractiveness of the area in terms of tourism and business investment whilst ensuring that Wales as a nation is resilient**

Rural Carmarthenshire consists of highly distinctive and attractive locations with a mix of market towns and modern retail along with stunning landscapes. The richness and diversity of its heritage and culture is also a significant strength of rural Carmarthenshire. However, in order to attract and retain talented people there is a need to ensure sufficient access to key services which are slowly being lost in many rural towns and villages. Infrastructure is also a vital component in the future regeneration of rural Carmarthenshire including employment sites and premises; attractive market towns and access to rural transport.

The LAG will therefore seek to deliver against the higher level aim by:

- *Developing and implementing a programme of investment capable of engaging visitors and investors to the area;*
- *Targeted development of land, property and infrastructure;*
- *Maximise the opportunities available from the Swansea City Region Deal and Next Generation Broadband infrastructure;*
- *Supporting and developing the use of the Welsh language;*
- *To maximise opportunities from greener energy.*

#### **Strategic aim 6: to support the health and wellbeing of the population of rural Carmarthenshire.**

With many of our rural areas experiencing loss of service, a key focus of the LDS will be to identify and test new ways of providing services in rural areas such as community cafes, leisure, shops, transport, social care services, childcare etc. which are sustainable and accessible to all. Areas of activity will include social enterprise development; asset transfers, shared/mobile service provision and ensuring volunteer engagement in the delivery of local services.

The LAG has commissioned a research report into poverty in rural Carmarthenshire and will



seek to deliver the recommendations and key themes from this report by:

- *Ensuring access to services within rural areas by developing new approaches to service delivery and supporting social enterprise development.*

If you have an innovative idea or for further information please contact the RDP Team on 01267 242431/394; email [RDPsirgar@sirgar.gov.uk](mailto:RDPsirgar@sirgar.gov.uk) or visit the website <http://wwec.org.uk>

