

## Skills and Re-Training in Port Talbot

### TATA Taskforce

Port Talbot is just one location owned by Tata Steel in Wales. Its significance as a regional, rather than just a local, employer has been recognised by the Welsh Government.

On 20 January 2016 the Minister for Enterprise, Science and Transport Edwina Hart AM chaired the first meeting of the Tata Task Force which consists of the following organisations from across a range of social partners:

Tata Steel	CBI	Careers Wales
Unite	Department of Business Innovation and Skills	Job Centre Plus
Community Union	Wales Office	Chair of the Murco Task Force
Multi-Union	Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University	<b>Neath Port Talbot College (NPTC Group) the local further education college.</b>
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council	Health Board	
UK Steel Enterprise	Industry Wales	

The Taskforce will look at three distinct areas of possible support, namely:

- Business support and supply chains
- Health
- Procurement

The Taskforce last met on Monday 4 April 2016, chaired by Welsh Government Minister Edwina Hart, and with the Welsh Secretary Alun Cairns also in attendance.

### Previous business support in the field of skills

Wales has recent experience of responding to global economic shocks and redundancies, most recently that caused by the economic downturn of 2008. Launched in January 2009, and targeted solely at the automotive sector, **ProAct** was a financial support package designed to help businesses cope with the recession and use this quiet time to up-skill staff in readiness for an economic upturn. The support package provided funding for training for employees who were on short time working, and wage subsidy support to help retain skilled staff who may otherwise have been made redundant.

The programme had two specific objectives:

- to increase economic activity through boosting skills levels, productivity and efficiency
- to safeguard existing jobs in key sectors of the Welsh economy.

Later, in March 2009 ProAct support was opened out to all sectors. The closing date was extended from March 2010 to June 2010, the independent review of the scheme was largely positive.

In parallel, **Skills Growth Wales** (SGW) was launched to assist businesses during the economic recovery phase from April 2010. SGW was devised by the Welsh Government to enable businesses to undertake (mostly accredited) training that would not otherwise have been affordable, and that would lead to demonstrable skills improvements within 12 months. Businesses continue to enjoy funded apprenticeships and specific training support under the current European Structural Funds Programme, via the European Social Fund (ESF). In addition, support is available through a specific programme to help individuals who would not normally qualify for ESF.

The provision of training and re-skilling services is often delivered by further education (FE) colleges independently or via consortia in the case of apprenticeships.

ColegauCymru/CollegesWales has supported Job Centre Plus and DWP representatives to meet with FE college principals to explore closer collaboration and the possible collocation of services. CollegesWales is generally supportive of the prospect of a training levy but, due to the history of structural change within the economy, we would like to see the proceeds of a levy applied at a strategic level rather than on a business by business basis.

CollegesWales believes that FE providers are well placed to support individuals who are in danger of redundancy as well as those who are already unemployed. Specific attention needs to be paid to the provision of continuing education, particularly those over 25, and also to the needs of those furthest from the workplace or formal learning. We would particularly welcome closer working relationships between colleges and the Work Programme providers. We believe that it is imperative to the success of future schemes, which might be funded by ESF, Welsh Government or UK Departments, that FE colleges are included in both the design and delivery of interventions at the earliest possible stage.

## Wales' FE Colleges

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- Bridgend College
- Cardiff and Vale College (steel production based in local companies such as Celsa Steel UK)
- Coleg Cambria (covers the location of the Tata site in Shotton)
- Coleg Ceredigion
- Coleg Gwent (the community of the former Ebbw Vale steel works, also Llanwern)
- Coleg Sir Gâr (Carmarthenshire and includes the Trostre Tata Steel site)
- Coleg y Cymoedd (Rhondda, Cynon Valley and Caerphilly)
- Gower College Swansea
- Grŵp Llandrillo Menai
- NPTC Group of Colleges (Neath, Port Talbot as well as Mid Wales)
- Pembrokeshire College (linked to previous restructuring such as Murco)
- St David's Catholic College (sixth form college in Cardiff)
- The College Merthyr Tydfil
- YMCA WEA Cymru (a community based FE institution)

## Further Information

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Colleges: [www.collegeswales.ac.uk/wales\\_colleges-42.aspx](http://www.collegeswales.ac.uk/wales_colleges-42.aspx)

CollegesWales: T: 029 2052 2500 E: [hello@collegeswales.ac.uk](mailto:hello@collegeswales.ac.uk)  @collegeswales