

I am writing as an outsider who has had no real interaction with the Taskforce and so am unfamiliar with what it has been set up to do or with anything it has achieved, so my comments reflect what I have come across working “on the ground”. the people involved in the Taskforce – but in all honesty, I cannot find that the Taskforce has had an impact on any of the many hundreds of people I come into contact with – I don’t think that most people have ever heard of it.

I feel quite strongly that the Welsh Government wastes huge amounts of taxpayers’ money on initiatives like this, run by very well-meaning and committed people – but apart from their costs, there is all the promotional material, the marketing etc etc. which infuriates everyone who is struggling for funds, whether it is a charity like mine or an individual wondering how they are going to pay for the next food shop.

I don’t know what the Taskforce has cost – but I would estimate several hundred thousand pounds – if, for example, I had just one of those one hundred thousand pounds, I can run my whole organization for more than a year and help 40–50 people to start a business.

It seems to be poor value for money – and people in the Valleys on the whole are quite sick of being seen as a basket case – they feel positive about their area so there needs to be more emphasis on what is good there. To what extent is the Valleys Taskforce benefitting Valleys communities?

I cannot see that there has been any tangible benefit

- Are the Taskforce’s specific policy initiatives delivering successful outcomes that will help create sustainable growth and reduce poverty?

No – I don’t think the Taskforce has had any impact at grassroots level

- Is the Taskforce targeting its activities and projects in areas of the Valleys which most need it?

They are not visible in the Valleys – it does not seem to have made itself relevant at grassroots level

- In July 2019 the Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport announced the Taskforce would focus on seven priority areas and the Taskforce area was extended to include the Gwendraeth and Amman Valleys. The statement can be found [here](#). What has been the impact of the changes to the Taskforce's priorities? Has it made the Taskforce more or less effective?

No impact at all

- How well is the Taskforce working with, and adding value to, other economic development initiatives in the Valleys?
I don't know – but I have not come across anyone working with them except for other public sector bodies perhaps

- To what extent has the Taskforce considered gender equality in its workstreams, and are you content with the approach to measuring outcomes?

I have no idea

- What potential approaches could the Welsh Government take in its forthcoming economic strategy for the Heads of the Valleys, and which specific actions or policies should be included in this?

It should avoid wasting money on more talk shops and reports and seek to work more in partnership with organizations already doing good stuff and support them to grow it

- Which additional short-term measures could be adopted to deliver positive outcomes for Valleys communities before the Taskforce disbands in March 2021?

Short term doesn't work in this area – it needs long term commitment. Some people are very cynical about organizations that dive in, work for a year or two running a “programme” and then disappear. They tend to be suspicious of public sector organizations as a result

- How should the Taskforce's work be taken forward after it disbands in March 2021? Which workstreams should be prioritised by the Welsh Government, and to what extent is a change in approach required?

As I mentioned above, all these initiatives are perceived as, and appear to be, just discussing issues and going round and round in the same circles. There are very many good initiatives which have been started by local people and which WG should support . Often WG support undermines local businesses – for example offering business advice etc for free undermines all the small local businesses who could make a very good job of it if they weren't undercut by free provision. If WG wants to offer free support, then they should fund small businesses offering it so they can provide it for free, not set up an expensive body to compete with them. A useful thing which WG could do would be to lobby Central Government to bring about changes in the benefits system – this is a major thing which hampers entrepreneurialism and other efforts by people at grassroots level trying to change things for themselves. I can provide more information on what is needed.