

Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

REPORT TO: Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 18 December 2023

LOCATION: Hybrid

TITLE: Feedback from the visit to Food Centre Wales

PURPOSE OF REPORT: To provide feedback from the visit to Food Centre Wales on 14 November 2023

REASON SCRUTINY HAVE REQUESTED THE INFORMATION:

BACKGROUND:

Consideration was given to the report related to Food Centre Wales at the Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23rd October 2023. It was built by Ceredigion County Council at Horeb, Llandysul, and opened in 1996, to provide technical support for the food industry in Ceredigion as well as Mid and South-West Wales. Its location, being accessible to rural, farming communities in Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire highlights one of its key objectives, which is to support farming businesses that wished to diversify into added-value processing. Food Centre Wales provides technical services to business start-ups, SMEs and national food manufacturers.

Food Centre Wales has formed a partnership with another two food technology centres in Wales, located in Llangefni and Cardiff to provide Wales-wide support for the food industry. An overview of the current provision including a focus on the Helix project and the impact on the economy was provided. Since 2016, the Food Centre Wales team has delivered good results through the HELIX project against the targets set. It was noted that the table included in the report did not reflect the full volume of support provided as they were only able to include the first intervention provided to businesses, although many returned a few times a year.

In terms of the future, Ceredigion County Council purchased a further 5 acres of land adjacent to the current estate in 2019 at Horeb to facilitate future growth plans. Two projects were currently being developed and assessed for inclusion in the Growth Deal programme for Mid Wales:

- I. The establishment of a Food Manufacturing Innovation Centre would bring state-of-the-art, industrial-scale pilot facilities aimed at enabling the growth of more mid-sized food manufacturing businesses in Mid Wales.

- II. The provision of grow-on food manufacturing facilities, building on the current incubator units at Food Centre Wales.

These developments would further enhance the provision of services for the agri-food sector in Ceredigion, which was key to its economic well-being and would help to future-proof the facility and its long-term relevance and viability. There were also exciting developments by other projects in the Growing Mid Wales Growth Deal namely AberInnovation and Tir Glas, which would complement Food Centre Wales. The Centre had been awarded a 2-year extension of core budget, but there was no certainty following this.

CURRENT SITUATION:

The Committee undertook a site visit to further review the site's work and its future plans on 14 November 2023. The Senior Food Technologist delivered a presentation to Members followed by a visit of the site.

The purpose of the Food Centre was discussed:

For businesses:

- Enablers, knowledge transfer
- Problem solvers
- Encourage innovation

For industry and the economy:

- Facilitate growth
- Help the industry adapt

Unique characteristics of the Food Centre Wales are industry experience, commercial manufacturing facility, incubator units, and sector stakeholder engagement – FSA, IFST, LA EHO/TSO, CBRI.

The technical services provided are:

- Food Safety Management Systems (BRC, SALSA)
- Product / Process Development & Validation
- Reformulation, Added Value
- Site design, Equipment Sourcing
- Legislative requirements & guidance
- Packaging, Shelf life testing, Labelling, Nutritional claims
- Factory audits, Internal Auditing
- Waste reduction, Process Efficiency.

A number of training courses are provided which include Accredited Food Safety Courses &

HACCP up to L4, Allergen Awareness, Internal Auditing, Root Cause Analysis, First Aid, Cheese making, Butchery Skills, Principles of Curing, Ice cream making, Sausage making and Charcuterie. A number of online workshops/webinars are also available.

The manufacturing and innovation hub includes a dairy comprising 3 processing rooms, raw processing room, 2 further processing rooms, a secondary / tertiary packing room and sundry service areas and storage.

The importance of attracting people into the sector as food technicians was highlighted as there is a shortage. The Committee were thankful for the valuable tour provided to the Committee.



Wellbeing of Future Generations:

Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If, not, please state why.

No

Summary of Integrated Impact Assessment:

Long term: N/A

Collaboration: N/A

Involvement: N/A

Prevention: N/A

Integration: N/A

RECOMMENDATION (S):

To note the work of the Committee.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION (S):

Contact Name: Lisa Evans
Designation: Scrutiny and Standards Officer
Date of Report: 1/12/23
Acronyms: