# Local skills for local people

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

Hi, I'm Martha Lane Fox. I am President of the British Chambersof Commerce and Chancellor of The Open University, which, as I've said before,are the two best jobs in the world. So I feel very lucky. Welcome to our podcast about skillsin the UK, as I've talked about before. 84% of businesses from the OU’s BusinessBarometer say that they're facing a skills shortage,which is a dramatic number for the UK. And I'm thrilled today to drill downa bit more locally and regionally with Alwen Williams who has come to us from AmbitionNorth Wales. Brilliant job title. AlwenI’d love to hear what you do, we're going to talk a bitmore about those regional differences and what we can do at a more hyperlocallevel to really address the challenges. So welcome, Alwen. Do you want to tell us what ambitionNorth Wales is? I have my own personalAmbition North Wales, which I just described to you, because I'm trying to climb Snowdonand raise some money soon, but I think that's probably notwhat your job is.

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

No, I wish it was, though. So AmbitionNorth Wales is a partnership, really. It's a partnershipwithin the public sector, working closely with the private sector to invest. We're currently investing or looking to invest £1 billionworth of capital in the region. It’s a nice number to have in your pocket. Absolutely.Yeah. So over the next 15 years,we will create up to 4,200 new jobs in the economy and £240 million of that £1 billionis already ring-fenced and being contributedby UK and Welsh Government. Equally, so £120 million from each. And we have a portfolio of projectsthat we're delivering into key sectors to create these new employmentopportunities for young people and people in general within the economyin North Wales.

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

Fantastic. Well there's a lot to unpick in thatwe can come back to for a minute, but just to go a little bit more macroaround the kind of Welsh landscape. Yeah, the actual landscapebut the business landscape, you know, the numbers saythat 75% of Welsh business leaders feel as thoughthey're facing a skills crisis, which interestingly is slightly lowerthan that 84% at a national level. But I know it's still a very profoundpriority for businesses in the region.

Can you just tell us a bitabout the business landscape and how you perceive the differencesin skills across sectors and perhaps a differenceaccording to the Welsh aspect of what you doas opposed to other bits of the country?

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

Yeah, of course. And I think, well we’ve just conductedinterestingly, our own survey in North Wales. So going even more deeperinto what employers are saying and 70% of our businessesare struggling with recruitment and finding the right skillsfor the roles that they have.

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

Would you say that's across the sectorsthat you deal with?

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

It's across the sectors. So we targeted all businessesin North Wales and 70% said that there are issues.

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

But again, just to interrupt you,but just to tell listeners what are the keyindustries in North Wales? What is the kind of economic landscapelike around you?

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

Yeah, so we’ve identified the keyskills shortages, I think, but we look at themas opportunities as well. So the future skills we think will focusreally strongly in the green sector. So renewable industriesand we see that, you know, that key message is an opportunity for usbecause it means we need to continue to work with skills providers, colleges,universities, to develop the courses that will provide those peopleto fulfill those roles. The project managementalso has been highlighted as a key shortage, I guess,and this is something we've felt and I’ve felt particularly in my own teamwhilst recruiting as well. It's a very scarce resourceand therefore that comes with, you know, an increasing price pointfor that skill.

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

Any project managerslistening, move to North Wales.

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

Absolutely Yeah, and digital skills as well. What we're seeing is that digitalis it's not specific to any one sector. Actually every single sector requirespeople with digital skills and that's going to increaseas the years pass by. So there's a real focus inimproving that digital literacy as well.

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

Yeah that’s a huge piece of the puzzle. It's something I've worked on a bitin my career and you know, it's still the challengepart is just this binary having skills or no skills, but then it's just everchanging landscape in digital. You know,you might think, I've just cracked and I’ve still got to understandabout social media. Oh my God, now I've got to understandabout AI and wait for it. Then it's going to be quantumand then it's going to be something else. So it is just this constantly shiftinglandscape, isn't it?

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

Yeah, it is. And I think The added... I see it again. I see an advantage in this for Walesas we have our own language. Yes. And therefore we need to and we do promote and support the growth of the Welshlanguage in Wales. But it’s about findingthen the resource that has the skill but also able to either bring proficiencyin the Welsh language or able to and willing to learn the languageas they go into employment as well.

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

Yeah, that's a really interesting wayof thinking about a competitive advantage, having a language. And just again, because we haven'ttalked yet in our series much about these regional differenceswithin the UK, you know, when you think about Walesand the kind of relative decline or not economically comparedto the rest of the country, just give me a bit ofhow you think about Wales and how it sits in the wider landscape of the UKand what we can learn from that sort of more specific local regionthat we could apply to other places? Yeah. Both good and bad I guess.

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

Yeah, I think, you know, it's 20 years since Wales was a devolved. Yeah. Twenty years this year? Yes I think, I think it is. And we are expecting the announcementof the new First Minister for Wales. Yes. Which is you know, a generational change in the leadership of governmentin Wales as well. And I think that's really significantas well as being the first black leaderand first minister in Europe actually. So a huge, you know, a huge advantage and somethingto be really proud of as a country. I think it gives us the opportunity as a nation to really get underthe skin of what today's issues are and how we plan and develop programmesand projects for the future. One of the, I think one of the perhaps weaknesses inworking with government is that sometimes we fail to think long-term enough.One of the things I think Wales has is a real focuson future generations. So in 2015 we had the Wellbeing of Future Generations Wales Act come in. And what is that? Yeah. So it requiresall public sector organisations to comply and work within the Act,which is to really put in place and think about how we prepare for the unborn generation. What do we need to do nowin terms of sustainable development so that we leave society in a good place for the generationsthat come behind us.

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

What kind of things does that encompass?

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

So it's about thinking, you know,climate change is probably one of the I mean, going to use systemsthinking language. I am a current systemsthinking student with the OU. Okay.

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

Very good to hear that.

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

I finished my MastersI’m very much looking forward to that. But climate change is a very messyproblem. It's a messy issue. It's a global issue. It's something that we all havea responsibility to think about. And I think what theWellbeing of Future Generations Act does is really focus onsustainable development is an underlying principleof any capital development. So for example, The Growth Dealwhich I lead, we will think about carbon emissionsand biodiversity and ensure that the assetsthat we're investing in are assets that are as good as they can beand as clean as they can be for our future generations. So our legacy almost is being,you know, we're pushing for a better legacyfor our young people of the future.

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

That's a really interestingpiece of legislation, isn't it? I don't often hear about governmentstaking the time to really plan long term. It's one of the things I thinkdrives businesses quite mad is just this chopping and changingand not any certainty in the long term policy. So it's a really interesting insight. And just to drill down a bitfurther on that, what is thegenerational kind of behaviors in Wales? Do they vary to other bits of the country and what does the workforcelook like compared to other places?

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

Yes. So there's a really concerningstatistic at the moment that we've seen,you know, the trend developing post-COVID of economic inactivity in the labour marketbetween the ages of 16 and 24.

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

Oh dear, that’s a bad one, isn’t it?

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**It is. Very, very worrying. I don't know what the solution is,but I definitely think it needs focus now. If you think about the situationthat we are in in North Wales, where we're bringing over 4,000 new employmentopportunities into the labour market, if we aren't able totarget that 16 to 24 year old in the labour market,then how will we fill those roles?

So I think there's a recognition needed that doing moreof what we've always done is not working. I think COVID as a pandemic has also, you know, thrown a spanner in the worksand it's a clear message. The trend, the increasing trend for meis a clear message that we need to think differentlyabout how work appeals to young people.

When I was 19, I started working full timeand haven't stopped since then, but it was very mucha culture of going into the office. And so when I was 19,I was observing leaders above me.

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

You learnt how to work.

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

I was learning how to work. I was learning the behaviours,how to deal with people, how to deal with conflictand difficult situations, how to present myself,how to accept and give feedback. And I think, you know, myself over COVID,I recruited so many people into my team over Zoom and proceeded to work with them over two years in a very distance and sporadic way because it was overthe pixels rather than in a room together. So I think a lot of that informallearning has been lost and I think young peopleare probably disadvantaged from that.

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

Do you think that’s quite specific? You know, again,just to bring it back to North Wales. Yep. That’s something that you feelis quite disproportionate in your area?

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

I don't think it's disproportionate. I think it's systemic across the economy.

It is a trend that... Actually last weekI heard the CBI note in an economic briefing, again, one of our senior lecturers in economy in Bangor University again reiterated the trend in a presentation that I heardlast week, at the end of last week. And I think it's across Walesand I would be extremely surprised if it's not symptomaticin other countries and beyond as well.

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

Yeah, I think unfortunately you're right. And while there are so many benefitsin some ways to having a bit more flexibility about where you workand how you work.

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

Yes.

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

I completely agree with you. Those first years are essentialto be able to appreciate what work is, how to how to get good at itand how to get stuff done. I was really struckrecently by an interview I saw with Barack Obama who said someone was askingabout advice for young people and what's the best advice to gotake forward in your in your life? And he said, just be good at getting stuffdone. That's simple. It's that simple. If you're young and you can get stuffdone, you'll get more stuff to do and then you'll get more stuff doneand you'll get more stuff to do. And I really love that. And I thought, we've lost some of that sometimesin how we think about work and skills. And it’s just so fundamental, isn’t it? Just to come back to your billion pounds because that really was an exciting numberto hear on a podcast. Tell me a bit more about that,how you're going to deploy it, how you work in partnershipwith businesses, and any examplesyou could give of businesses in North Walesthat you might be working with?

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

Yeah, absolutely. So we've got five key themesthat we've identified for investment. So some of them are targeting areas of chronic market failureand some of them.

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

Such as? Can you give an example?

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

Yeah. So digital infrastructure, I would say my backgroundis in telecommunications as well. So before I moved into local governmentI worked with...

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

So we both bang our headsabout the broadband network.

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

Exactly. Exactly. And then so an area of chronic market failure, but such a huge opportunity,if we can fill the gap. You know,there are areas in digital connectivity that just haven't been investablefrom a commercial perspective. In North Wales,we have a lot of rural premises as well. So that's one example. So digital connectivity is a themewithin our portfolio.

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

I'm so happy you said that. Sorry, I can’t help but dive into itbecause it’s a special topic for me as somebody who worked in technology. But I think about this a lot. You know, I often have conversations withpoliticians, frankly, that go like this: But we’ve got you know 90% and I say yeah butthat 10% is dragging down the 90% because you're never going to be ableto really unleash productivity. Imagine if you are a I don't know, a farmin rural Wales with zero connectivity. How are you meant to do anythingfrom your tax return to finding new recruits,to being able to engage in whatever other thingsyou might need to do as a business? It's so intense, isn't it? And I think we lose thatbecause you kind of think, well, you know, 95% is pretty good,but it’s the 5%

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

Yeah.

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

Absolutely vital to enable more of us to get more benefit from all of it,if that makes sense.

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

Yeah. And society isn’t allowing usto be digitally disconnected anymore. I’m a farmer’s daughterfrom rural parts of North Wales and it’s absolutely that. The farmis very rural, suffers from really poor connectivity, but then my familyare still expected to comply with, you know...

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

All things you have to do.

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

All of the things that youhave to do to be compliant and, you know, I think post-COVID as well,there is an opportunity within rural areasfor higher value employment to go into rural areasbecause of the ability to work from home. But if you don't have the abilityto connect and have parity in that connectivityfrom your home, then again, you are disadvantaged in the laboureconomy.

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

Absolutely. And that’s both skills and infrastructure,as you rightly said.

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

Agreed.

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

So anyway. Digital infrastructure is the first onewe already covered one, We’ve got the other four. Bit of a hobbyhorse for me as well, given my background. But yes, we've got land and property,so there are sort of key sites and premisesthat just haven't been developed over decades in North Wales. That are generally occupied or unoccupied?

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

Unoccupied mostly, some of these key sites can be viablecommercially, but need core services put in and just some public sectorinvestments intervened. So we're doing that. We have agrifood and tourism,a key sector for us in North Wales. And you know, the visitor economyis hugely important for North Wales.

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

And where do those visitorstend to come from? Educate listeners a bit about whatyour tourism economy looks like.

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

I think, you know, less people from Wales travel within Wales as visitors,which I think is interesting. If you look at Scotland, quite a high, a third of Scottish visitoreconomy is Scottish people. We see less of that in Wales. So people do travel across the borderfrom Cheshire and further. Connectivity between London and North Wales, as I've provedthis morning, is really easy as well. Two hours on the train to Euston from Chester,which is very close to the border. So, and of course we have so many castles, lots of history, a beautiful coastline, so there are lots of reasonsto come and visit North Wales. But what we're seeing less of is the pound per visitor per day is it tends to be lower. So I think we need to developnew attractions and maintain the interest in why people would come to North Walesif they've already been once, why would they come back. Yeah. And then we've got innovationin high value manufacturing. So in North East Walesparticularly, we’ve got a long tradition and a long history of manufacturing.

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

Can you give some examplesof some businesses?

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

Yes. So we've got businesses such as JCB located in Wrexham, we've got a famous. Famous Wrexham,

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

not the only thing located in Wrexham. Absolutely! Ryan Reynolds is located in Wrexham isn’t he? I mean, he lives there now, right?

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

Well, we're doing wellin terms of visibility. I think there’s a lot to be said about... It's really interesting.

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

That is a case study, isn't it?

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

What has been built inand around Wrexham. We also have...

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

And that is again, that is a skills point, isn’t it? Because what it feels to meis just somebody that's watched the programme,not deep in the knowledge like you are, but there's a skill around feelings that the community has been givensome power about itself again, isn't it? And people have been ableto, you know, improve the environment through the football cluband the all the things that happen as the network of the football clubgets more successful.

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

It is interesting. It is linked to skills.Well, football is a powerful machine isn’t it? You know if I had a pound for every time I've sat in a foreign taxiand tried to explain that I'm from Wales but the minute you say Gareth Balepeople know exactly where Wales is. Yeah. And I think you know, in that perspectivewhat Wrexham has done really well is engage people through footballand it's, you know, it's gone internationaland we as a result we have a lot of focus on, on Wrexhamand as a consequence the entire region. We’ve got the Advanced ManufacturingResearch Centre, AMRC, located in North Wales. So there's a collaboration therewith Sheffield University. Yep. So it's not just aboutthe manufacturing sector that's there now, it's about innovating with themfor the future. So how can we drive innovationinto manufacturing so that we safeguard all of those jobs for the futureand make them more sustainable alongside sort of the changing environmentand climates as well?

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

Yes.

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

And then we’ve got low carbon energy...A huge, huge opportunity. Yeah. So in North Wales we've got offshorewind, we've got power from tidal stream, we've got one of the most powerfultidal streams I think in the top three in Europe.

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

Wow, I did not realise that.

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

Yeah, exactly. Tidal currents. So there’s a... And againit’s a very, it’s a space where innovation is just being drivenand we’re able to facilitate that innovationthrough what we have in North Wales. Hydrogenso the development of green hydrogen and looking at how we can really setNorth Wales at a global level as a pioneerin that space of hydrogen innovation and green hydrogen, particularly in decarbonisationof industry, but also more long term into transportand decarbonisation of heavy goods vehicles, linking quite nicelywith that, with that advanced manufacturingand you know, the sector that you tend to seeheavy goods vehicles operate within. And then we’ve got... Yes, how many have I said there? Agrifood and tourism...

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

I think you’ve nearly... You’re either at four or five there.

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

Digital, land and property, agrifood and tourism and low carbon energy.

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

Yes, it you've done it. I mean the low carbon energypiece is really interesting isn’t it? One of the things I feelI've learned as president of British Chambers is just how much is going onlocally in different places, just slightly differentshades of what might be happening. But I feel as thoughwe're still massively underestimating the potential opportunity here, and I hope that the next shade of whatevergovernment, not a political point, really sees this opportunityin the UK to drive the green economy and thereforemassive increase in jobs in these sectors. And just this is something I think wereally do have an opportunity to excel at.

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

I agree. And young people make much more valuesbased decisions.

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

Very important point. They want to work. You know, a couple of my teamhave really questioned and gone further than this is a jobit will provide me with work and a salary it’s more than that. And I think that's across young peoplenow that they are looking to make sure that the value they bring to a roleis more, it’s in line with sustainable development.

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

It’s not adding to the problem that we have in terms of climate changeand global warming. And I quite like that.

I think it's challenging employersto think about how they adapt their operating models and their businessesto be able to provide those green jobs. And, you know, this is a key messagefor skills providers as well, is how do we equip young peoplewith the knowledge and the skills they need to be ableto apply that thinking when they go into workand to challenge the status quo? Because we need thatgenerational challenge, I think as well.

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

Yeah, I think that's really important. And sometimes I feel as we givea bit of a bad rap to young generation that they're somehow perceivedas a bit lazy or wanting everything on their terms when actually they'refacing some pretty intense headwinds. And certainly the young people I meet are challenging usto think about those headwinds differently from the climate to the cost of living to, you know, whether they're ever goingto be able to own anything really. I mean, I think it's really intensewhat they're thinking about and how they're perceiving workin that context.

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

I agree. And, you know, even down to thingslike how do they get to work? Yeah. You know, thinking aboutall of the things we... where we want to get to is in linewith what they want. So rather than drive, I know 17 year oldswho are not really keen to drive a car because A) they can’t afford it.Cost of living... B) they don't want to be addingto the carbon emissions. So what are we doingin terms of designing work and where work existswith efficient and affordable and reliable transport networks so they can get to workwith public transport? And I think that challenge is great. I think it's helping us.

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

Yeah, keep the older generationon our toes and as we're all going to live so long, we're going to need to keepbeing challenged by the whippersnappers. Alwen, just imagine yourself. I could totally imagineyou as Prime Minister, but imagine yourself as Prime Ministerand thinking about the way that this country works and operates. And it's so important to talk about the regionalisation that we've had overthe last few decades, whether it's through devolution or other different waysthat policy has shifted. Do you know, do you think we've gonefar enough from your perspective in Wales? What can Walesteach other places in the country? How would you be thinking about thiskind of central versus local challenges as a leader of the country?When you’re leader of the country?

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

Wow, what a question. I do think, you know, I think we’ve gotwe’re on a journey, aren’t we? And I don’t think, you know, it’sa continuous... again systems thinking... It’s a continuous enquiryand it’s a continuous process of identifying what we do well and thereforewhat should we keep developing and sharingand also looking outwards as well to what other countries are doing,how societies are building infrastructure in a waythat leads to a more sustainable economy. And I think there is probablyand I know Welsh Government do a lot of this,but perhaps what doesn't happen as much and it could be an opportunityis to really take those international lessonsand bring them closer to the regions. And we've had the restriction of COVID and the worldbasically stopped for a couple of years. But now I feel there's an opportunityto look outwardly, see how people have handled the pandemic, what changeshave been made through governments. How other governmentsare funding sustainable development and how we canbring those lessons into Wales, but also share what we're doingand I genuinely do believe that the one thing we've done rightis implementing this Future Wellbeing of Future GenerationsAct it’s been challenging. It's been a process of learningand it still is. But,but it’s put Wales on a platform that globally other countriesare now really leaning in to see what we're doingand how we're doing it. And it will continueto be that learning process and it’s really, it’s quite excitingbecause it provides an opportunity for us generationally, to leave a legacythat hopefully we can be proud of. And the last thing I would want to dois leave employment in, I don’t know, ten year’s timeand say I kind of feel ashamed because the generations coming behind mehave a big problem still to face. And they will because global warmingand climate change isn't going away soon. But I'd like to feel like I played an important rolein negating some of the challenges.

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

You have no doubt that you personally willdo that, but I think you've also kind of summed up brilliantlywhy often business leaders find it hard to invest in skillsbecause it is going to be about the future in a waythat sometimes the demands of the present can feel totally overwhelming,especially at the minute. You've talked quite a lot in the podcastsabout this, just about the moment we're in and all the headwindsthat businesses are facing big and small, but prioritising skills, investmentvery much locally, but also if you are a nationalbusiness, is so fundamental in ensuring that futureproofing proofing for future generations, isn’t it? So yeah, I think you've kind ofsummed up the challenge, but also why the reward is so greatand important.

**Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director at Ambition North Wales**

Yeah, and we also probably should mentionwe have a regional skills partnership in North Wales. They work within my team and we work,you know, hand in glove daily. So that the rolesthat we are creating through our investmentsare being understood by industry, but that the skills providersand the business sector understand what they need to prepare for and can voice their concernsabout their own challenges as well. And the Regional Skills Partnershipis a huge accolade for North Wales. They are a team, a small team of peoplefunded by Welsh Government who are so passionateabout developing the right skills so that we can, in Walesand in North Wales particularly, put ourselves out there and say,come here and work or come home and work.

**Martha Lane Fox, Chancellor of The Open Universityand President of the British Chambers of Commerce**

There you go, well, you heard it here! That's a perfect note to end on. You have described brilliantly whywe all need to pay attention to Wales. If not move, there and work there. And any project managers,you've got an open job offer. Thank you. AlwenI wish you much success in your OU degree. Please complete it. I hope I might even see you on stage to shake your handand give you your certificate. It's been really interestingto talk to you and hear about the lessonswe can learn from Wales. So thank you. I'm Martha Lane Fox and thank youfor listening to our podcast.