
NORTH WALES ECONOMIC AMBITION BOARD 10/12/21

Present:

Voting Members - Councillors:- Llinos Medi Huws (Isle of Anglesey County Council), Mark Pritchard (Wrexham County Borough Council), Louise Emery (Conwy County Borough Council), Billy Mullin (Flintshire Council), Hugh Evans (Denbighshire Council) and Dafydd Meurig (Gwynedd Council).

Advisors – Prof. Iwan Davies (Bangor University), Dr Maria Hinfelaar (Glyndŵr University), Dafydd Evans (Grŵp Llandrillo Menai) and Askar Sheibani (Business Delivery Board).

Chief Officers - Graham Boase (Denbighshire Council), Neal Cockerton (Flintshire Council), Ian Bancroft (Wrexham County Borough Council) and Annwen Morgan (Isle of Anglesey County Council).

Officers in attendance - Dafydd L. Edwards (Statutory Finance Officer – Host Authority), Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer - Host Authority), Alwen Williams (Portfolio Director), Hedd Vaughan-Evans (Operations Manager), Sheryl Le Bon Jones (Senior Operational Officer), Jane Richardson (Chair of the Executive Group), Stuart Whitfield (Digital Programme Manager), Kirrie Moore (Digital Connectivity Project Manager), Sian Pugh (Group Accountant - Corporate and Projects), Bryn Richards (Welsh Government), Sioned Williams (Gwynedd Council) and Annes Sion (Democracy Team Leader - Host Authority).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn, Councillor Charlie McCoubrey, Councillor Ian B Roberts, Yana Williams (Coleg Cambria), Iwan Davies (Conwy County Borough Council) and Dafydd Gibbard (Gwynedd Council).

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Declarations of personal interest were received from Maria Hinfelaar, Glyndŵr University and Askar Sheibani as a member of the Glyndŵr University Governing Body and Professor Iwan Davies, Bangor University, for item 9 as projects relating to Bangor University and Glyndŵr University were being discussed. It was noted that it was a prejudicial interest and they left the meeting.

For item 10, a declaration of personal interest was received from Professor Iwan Davies as the Bangor University representative. It was a prejudicial interest and he left the meeting.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

None to note.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair signed the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2021, as a true record.

5. NORTH WALES REGIONAL ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK - DRAFT

The report was submitted by Alwen Williams (Portfolio Director)

RESOLVED

To recommend the draft 'Regional Economic Framework for North Wales' for adoption by each local authority.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The Welsh Government's Economic Action Plan (EAP) established the basis for regional working, including a commitment to deliver a stronger regional voice through a regionally-focused model of economic development. This includes the establishment of regional teams and the development of Regional Economic Frameworks (REFs).

REFs are intended as a vehicle to help promote collaborative regional planning and delivery amongst public, private and third sector partners. Delivery will be focussed around a single shared vision for each region and supported by a suite of shared regional priorities and principles.

The development of REFs will be key in informing and influencing the delivery of Welsh Government funding priorities.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted and it was noted that Welsh Government's Economic Action Plan had established a foundation for regional working, which included establishing regional teams and developing Regional Economic Frameworks. It was explained that developing frameworks was an essential part of Welsh Government's commitment to the Economic Development Model. It was explained that when developing the frameworks, the Covid-19 recovery as well as the region's long-term aspirations needed to be considered.

It was noted that the frameworks helped to promote collaborative regional planning and delivery amongst public, private and third sector partners. It was explained that the framework would be focused around a single shared vision via a suite of shared regional priorities and principles. It was stressed that the frameworks would be key in informing and influencing the delivery of Welsh Government funding priorities.

It was stated that a period of targeted engagement had been held with a range of key regional stakeholders to co-design this placed-based approach to economic development. The priorities were noted under the main themes: The Social and Community Well-being Economy, Experience Economy and the Low Carbon and Low Emissions Economy. It was explained that the priorities were flexible, allowing the region to adapt and respond to the challenges and opportunities faced over the next 20 years.

During the discussion, the following matters were raised:-

- It was asked who this document was aimed at. It was noted that the document had been created for the region in order to have a clear purpose and to highlight priorities. It was noted that this partnership document would be a guide in order

to receive Welsh Government funding.

- It was noted that with the priorities seen in the Growth Deal, Corporate Joint Committees and in these Frameworks it was also asked how it would be possible to keep all of these aligned. It was noted that the document was a general one in terms of priorities and, consequently, clearly showed that the EAB was successful in implementing against the Regional Economic Frameworks. It was noted that the Frameworks aligned with the priorities already seen but that it provided a long-term framework for the region.
- It was stated that the decision noted the need for Local Authorities to accept the framework - it was asked if the partners also needed to do so. It was explained that stakeholders had had an opportunity to contribute to the framework and that it should be adopted by the partners also, if possible, to assist to build a stronger economy in north Wales.
- It was asked if it was possible for the Framework to be adopted by the EAB rather than in all the councils as the partners and the authorities were a part of the meeting. It was noted that returning to discuss it locally would slow down the process. The Monitoring Officer noted that adopting the Framework across all partners was not within the remit of the EAB and therefore there was a need to go back to decide on it within the Local Authorities.

6. INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The report was submitted by Alwen Williams (Portfolio Director).

DECISION

To note the update on the development of an investment strategy.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Each year the North Wales Growth Deal enters into an independent Gateway Review as part of its governance and assurance process. The Portfolio's Gateway Review, held in August 2021 delivered a delivery confidence rating of Amber/Green, which recognises that successful delivery appears probable. However, constant attention will be needed to ensure risks do not materialise into major issues threatening delivery.

One of the review panel's recommendation was that that a portfolio level strategy for attracting and securing private, and other, sector investment should be developed and adopted

DISCUSSION

The report was presented and it was noted that each year the Growth Deal entered into an independent Gateway Review as part of its governance and assurance process. The Review was held in August 2021, and a delivery confidence rating of Amber/Green was achieved, which recognised that successful delivery appeared probable. It was explained that the review panel recommended that a portfolio level strategy be developed for attracting and securing private, and other, sector investment.

It was explained that the Growth Deal is based on the delivery of projects across five programmes with an anticipated total capital expenditure of up to £1.1 billion. Of this total, it was added that £240million had been committed by UK and Welsh Government, and it was noted that £179.2million was expected to come from other public sector sources and £722million was to be committed by the private sector. It was noted that the investment would collectively contribute to the region's economic growth over a ten to

fifteen-year term and that the investment was targeted at strategically important industrial sectors, via the portfolio's five programmes.

In line with the recommendations of the review panel, it was noted that an initial draft of the Strategy had been submitted to the Portfolio Board on 26 November for consideration. The Portfolio Board requested additional time to consider and provide input to the document. It was stated that the strategy noted seven key objectives to get to grips with its aims effectively as well as encouraging regional collaboration and seeking to identify potential opportunities and threats associated with securing investment. It was added that successful deliver of the objectives would ensure a co-ordinated approach to securing the necessary investment.

Members were guided through the seven objectives within the Investment Strategy. It was explained that there would be continued collaboration with the regional stakeholders to build the approach which had been outlined and it was noted that an update on the Strategy would be given to Welsh and UK Government on 14 December 2021.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Concern was expressed that the local element was missing from the strategy and that the element of local discussion was taken from the region. It was explained that it was not intended for the document to lose the local element and it was noted that the full document disclosed much more. The importance of looking locally for investment and to extend further to attract other investment was noted. It was noted that the purpose of the strategy was to implement definite objectives to facilitate investment opportunities in the region and to ensure that the area attracted the right investors as well. It was explained that it was important to understand how every authority wanted to attract the investors and to include this in the strategy.
- The need to get businesses to invest was noted and to do this there was a need to work together and be a welcoming area.

7. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED to exclude the press and public from the meeting during the discussion on the following items due to the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 14, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 - information about the financial or business transactions of any specific person (including the authority that retains that information). There is an acknowledged public interest in openness in relation to the use of public resources and related financial issues. It is also acknowledged that there are occasions, in order to protect the financial and commercial interests that matters related to such information need to be discussed without being publicised. The report deals specifically with financial and business matter and related discussions. Publication of such commercially sensitive information could adversely affect the interests of the bodies and the Councils and undermine the confidence of other Growth Deal participants in sharing sensitive information for consideration. This would be contrary to the wider public interest of securing the best overall outcome.

8. CHANGE CONTROL - UPDATE

The report was submitted by Hedd Vaughan-Evans (Operations Manager).

RESOLVED

To note the update on the change requests.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

In December 2020, agreement was reached on the Final Deal Agreement for the North Wales Growth Deal. It was noted that the North Wales Growth Deal has a change management process in place to ensure potential changes to the scope of the Growth Deal and the projects are captured, assessed and where relevant considered by the Board.

Change requests are assessed by the Portfolio Management Office and considered by the Portfolio Board prior to any recommendation being made to the Board.

DISCUSSION

The report was discussed.

9. DIGITAL SIGNAL PROCESSING PROJECT - FULL BUSINESS CASE

The report was submitted by Hedd Vaughan-Evans (Operations Manager) and Stuart Whitfield (Digital Programme Manager).

RESOLVED

To approve the Full Business Case for the Digital Processing Centre project and authorise the Portfolio Director, in consultation with the Chair, Vice-chair, Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer to agree and enter into a funding agreement with Bangor University for the delivery of the project, subject to Bangor University addressing the outstanding issues set out in section 7 of the report and securing all necessary internal approvals for the project

To note that phase 2 and 3 of the project will be subject to Bangor University producing a Business Justification Case for each expenditure phase.

To delegate to the Portfolio Director, in consultation with the Chair, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer authority to approve the subsequent Business Justification Cases for phase 2 and 3 of the project where expenditure and benefits are in line with the Full Business Case presented.

DISCUSSION

The report was discussed.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 2.50 pm

CHAIRMAN