



NORTH WALES CJC ECONOMIC WELL-BEING SUB-COMMITTEE

11/07/2025

Present:

Voting Members – Councillors:- Carwyn Elias Jones (Isle of Anglesey County Council), Menna Trenholme (Cyngor Gwynedd), Charlie McCoubrey (Conwy County Borough Council), Dave Hughes (Flintshire County Council), Jason McLellan (Denbighshire County Council) and Mark Pritchard (Wrexham County Borough Council).

Co-opted Members (Non-voting) – Paul Spencer (Bangor University), David Roberts (Regional Skills Partnership), Councillor Edgar Wyn Owen (Eryri National Park) and Gwenllian Roberts (Grŵp Llandrillo Menai).

Chief Officers – Sioned Williams (Cyngor Gwynedd), Rhun ap Gareth (Conwy County Borough Council), Neal Cockerton (Flintshire County Council), Graham Boase (Denbighshire County Council) and Alwyn Jones (Wrexham County Borough Council).

Host Authority – Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Dewi Morgan (Statutory Finance Officer), Sian Pugh (Assistant Head of Finance – Sustainability and Development), Sara Jane Jones (Senior Accountant) and Rhodri Jones (Democracy Services Officer).

Ambition North Wales – Alwen Williams (Chief Executive of the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee), Hedd Vaughan-Evans (Head of Operations), David Hole (Operational Programme Manager), Eili Hughes (Growth Deal Programme Manager), Stuart Whitfield (Digital Programme Manager), David Mathews (Land and Property Programme Manager) and Nia Medi Williams (Resources and Operations Manager).

Observers – Dewi Williams and Bryn Richards (Welsh Government) and John Hawkins (UK Government)

Others present:

Item 14 Andrew Hudson (Director, Zip World) and Lucy Dean (QUAD Consultancy)

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

It was resolved to elect Councillor Mark Pritchard as Chair for 2025/26.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

It was resolved to elect Councillor Charlie McCoubrey as Vice-Chair for 2025/26.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:-

- Councillor Gary Pritchard (Isle of Anglesey County Council) with Councillor Carwyn Elias Jones deputising

- Councillor Nia Jeffreys (Cyngor Gwynedd) with Councillor Menna Trenholme deputising
- Edmund Burke (Bangor University) with Paul Spencer deputising
- Yana Williams (Coleg Cambria).
- Aled Jones-Griffith (Grŵp Llandrillo Menai) with Gwenllian Roberts deputising.
- Dylan Williams (Isle of Anglesey County Council)
- Dafydd Gibbard (Cyngor Gwynedd) with Sioned Williams deputising
- Wendy Boddington (Observer, Welsh Government) with Dewi Williams and Bryn Richards deputising.
- Gareth Ashman (UK Government Observer) with John Hawkins deputising.

4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Declarations of personal interest were received from Councillor Carwyn Elias Jones and Gwenllian Roberts for Item 11 as they were employed by Grŵp Llandrillo Menai. It was noted that it was a prejudicial interest and they withdrew from the meeting during the discussion.

5. URGENT ITEMS

No urgent matters were raised.

6. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 May 2025 as a true record.

7. TRANSPORT PROJECTS IN THE GROWTH DEAL

The report was presented by the Chief Executive and Head of Operations.

DECISION

- 1. To agree on the recommendation and preferred way forward – Revised Land and Property Programme (Option 2) stating that it will be a matter for the Sub-Committee to determine the projects to be prioritised and the approval of funding from the Growth Deal.**
- 2. To request that the Portfolio Director begins the transition process to formally include these elements in the Land and Property Programme.**

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

In March 2025, North Wales Ambition launched an 'Expression of Interest' process to select projects for the new Reserve List that would be able to bring forward business cases for funding in the future. One of the criteria set was that projects needed to be within the scope of the five existing Growth Deal programmes – Digital Connectivity, Low Carbon Energy, Land and Property, Innovation in High Value Manufacturing and Agri-Food and Tourism.

Of the 27 Expressions of Interest submitted, four were considered to be outside the scope of the Growth Deal. One of these was a revenue-based project and the other three were primarily transportation projects. It was noted that two had been submitted by the Welsh Government and one by Cyngor Gwynedd. Only one of the projects, 'Padeswood', met the scoring threshold to be considered for inclusion on the reserve

list; however, the report to the sub-committee made clear that this would be subject to a separate decision on the inclusion of transport projects within the Growth Deal.

At the Economic Well-being Sub-Committee in May, it was agreed that:

- a) the Sub-Committee agrees to initiate a process to assess and review the scope and case for extending the current Growth Deal to include transport projects.
- b) the Sub-Committee commissions the Portfolio Director to prepare a detailed options report in consultation with the Welsh and UK Governments and officers of the Constituent Councils and Education Partners.
- c) the options report be submitted to the Sub-committee with the intention of determining whether the formal change process should be commenced to ensure agreement for the extended Growth Deal to include Transport projects.

DISCUSSION

The members were reminded that this report was being submitted following a request from the board following the last meeting in order to be able to decide whether or not it was necessary to consider initiating a formal change process to extend the Growth Deal to accommodate projects with Transport elements.

It was explained that if the 'Padeswood' project were to be approved on the Reserve List, this would enable the possibility of adding more schemes to the reserve list in the future, provided they met the requirements of the Growth Deal. It was noted that this was the only scheme that met the scoring thresholds following an Expression of Interest process to be on the Reserve List, carried out by North Wales Ambition in March 2025.

The background and relevant considerations that had been achieved prior to submitting this report were detailed, noting that a wider scope of programmes had originally been considered when conceptualising the Growth Deal, before deciding on the five programmes that were already in place (Digital Connectivity, Low Carbon Energy, Land and Property, Innovation in High Value Manufacturing and Agri-Food and Tourism). It was explained that only one project comprising Transport aspects was considered at the time of discussing the Growth Deal's Heads of Terms agreement in 2019, and that project had been implemented within the Low Carbon Energy programme thus removing the need to establish a Strategic Transport Programme within the Growth Deal. However, it was emphasised that Transport as well as skills development and employability remained key areas.

It was highlighted that the Economic Well-being Sub-Committee had requested during their meeting in May 2025 that there be a thorough assessment of different options available in order to be able to deliver projects with Transport aspects within the Growth Deal. It was noted that three options had been considered by the Portfolio Management Office (PMO), and they were expanded upon as follows:

- **Option 1: New Transport Programme** – It was noted that this meant introducing a new Programme as part of the Growth Deal. It was explained that this option had been discounted because it required significant funds to be realised and would not be feasible to implement within the available budgets.
- **Option 2: Revised Land and Property Programme** – Consideration was given to amending the wording of this programme to highlight that it may include projects that have transport infrastructure aspects both on project sites and off-site when linked to developments. It was noted that revising the Programme to include this clarity was sensible and achievable.
- **Option 3: No change** – It was explained that this was the option that would have had the least impact, and it was confirmed that this option had been discounted as

it would have meant that the Joint Corporate Committee had lost an opportunity to fund projects that could contribute to the Growth Deal's targets.

It was confirmed that two options had been discounted and that a recommendation was being made to members that they adopt Option 2 – Revised Land and Property Programme. It was reported that introducing this amendment in accordance with option 2 was within the remit of this Sub-Committee as it provided wider clarity on the work that can be delivered within the Programme.

Support for this amendment to the Revised Land and Property Program was expressed, and members were pleased that it provided flexibility for transportation matters that were beneficial to the region. However, it was emphasised that it will be the decision of the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee to confirm which projects can be taken forward through this amendment.

8. NON-EXECUTIVE ADVISORS

The report was presented by the Chief Executive.

RESOLVED

To agree the process for the recruitment and appointment of Non-Executive Advisors in accordance with the requirements of the Procurement Act 2023 and related regulations.

- a) In addition to the adopted Job and Personal specifications adopted, a procurement package will be prepared with relevant award criteria.**
- b) Advertisement – The Non-Executive Advisor roles will be advertised on the Ambition North Wales website and social media channels (July 2025) and as required by the Act**
- c) Applications – Interested candidates will be asked to submit their CV and cover letter setting out why they want the role (July 2025)**
- d) Assessment and Shortlisting – Cover letters and CVs will be assessed against the role descriptions by the SRO and Chief Executive and a representative from the Portfolio Management Office, and a short-list will be agreed to be invited to interview (date in August TBC)**
- e) Interviews – Short-listed candidates will then be interviewed by a panel consisting of the Chair, Vice-Chair, SRO, Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer along with a third Elected member of the Sub-Committee (to be confirmed) who will make recommendations for appointment to the Economic Well-being Sub-Committee (on a date to be confirmed in September) based on the final scores following the interview.**
- f) Appointments – final appointments to be made by the Economic Well-being Sub-Committee (3 October 2025)**

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

In March 2025, the Corporate Joint Committee approved the Terms of Reference and the appointment process for a new Business Advisory Board following the transfer of the Growth Deal as well as approving the role descriptions for two new Non-Executive Advisors.

The Corporate Joint Committee authorised the interim Chief Executive to take all necessary steps to procure candidates to be recommended for appointment to the CJC's Economic Well-being Sub-Committee.

DISCUSSION

It was explained that this report updated Members on discussions that had taken place with the Welsh Government and the UK Government regarding the recruitment of Non-Executive Advisors and explained the process of appointing those individuals.

The members were reminded that the decision to appoint two Non-Executive Advisors had been made at the March 2025 meeting of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board. It was explained that the Advisors would work to support the Growth Deal as they were individuals who would have significant experience within the private and commercial sector. It was elaborated this would enable them to make decisions effectively.

It was detailed that the Non-Executive Advisors would support the officers of the Portfolio Management Office and would also be appointed Chair and Vice-Chair of the Business Advisory Board which was in the process of being set up. It was added that they would attend the committees of the Corporate Joint Committee in an advisory role.

It was reported that budgets and role descriptions had already been approved by the Economic Ambition Board and the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee, confirming that discussions had taken place with the Welsh Government to confirm the budgets as well as the appointment process. It was specified that the budget allowed for pay of up to £30,000 annually for each Non-Executive Advisor, with an additional £10,000 for the Chair and an additional £5,000 for the Vice-Chair. These figures were confirmed to be within the maximum of £50,000 per Advisor as approved within previous discussions.

It was explained that the Non-Executive Advisors would be appointed through an open competitive procedure, stressing that specific requirements were being followed in order to ensure compliance with the Procurement Act 2023 and any related Regulations. The recruitment process was detailed, stating that an advertisement will be released on the Joint Committee's website until the end of July, with interviews taking place in September before confirming the appointments at the 03 October 2025 meeting of this Sub-Committee.

It was confirmed that Ambition North Wales had received legal advice to ensure that the Advisors were appropriately appointed within the governance arrangement.

The appointment of Non-Executive Advisors was welcomed by the Members who stated that they would add great benefit to the processes of the Corporate Joint Committee.

In response to an enquiry, the Chief Executive confirmed that the role descriptions of the Non-Executive Advisors required them to oversee the work and projects of the Corporate Joint Committee as a whole, stating that elements of Strategic Transport and Planning will be part of the function. However, they wanted to target the focus towards the Growth Deal as a starting point before extending it wider.

In response to an enquiry, the Chief Executive confirmed that it was essential that the Non-Executive Advisors were involved in the setting up of the Business Advisory Board within their role as Chair and Vice-chair. It was confirmed that the timeline for developing the Board would begin after confirming the appointments of the Non-Executive Advisors. It was elaborated that an additional report would be submitted to this Sub-committee in due course to explain the timetable and stages of establishing the Business Advisory Board.

In response to enquiries regarding the Non-Executive Advisors' terms of employment, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that they were not allowed to be Co-opted Members of any meeting as they were employed officers. It was confirmed that the intention was to employ advisors through a procurement agreement following legal advice, and this did not lead to aspects such as contributing to pensions as part of the employment. The Chief Executive elaborated that the Advisors' contract would be effective for a two-year term.

Following an enquiry about the interviews, it was proposed and seconded for another member of the Sub-Committee to be present as part of the Interview Panel. It was noted that the Panel already included the Chair, Vice-Chair, Chief Executive, and the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) and it was considered that it would be useful for another member of the Sub-Committee to be present to gain experience and be involved in the decision. The members were invited to express an interest if they wished to be part of the Panel which would be held in September, beyond this meeting.

9. ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

The report was presented by the Head of Operations

RESOLVED

- 1. To consider and note the Annual Report for 2024/25.**
- 2. To approve the submission of the Annual Report for 2024/25 to the Welsh Government and the UK Government, and also to the local authorities' scrutiny committees.**

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Quarterly and annual reporting on progress against the North Wales Growth Deal is one of the requirements of the Final Growth Deal Agreement. Following consideration by the North Wales CJC's Economic Well-being Sub-Committee, the reports will be shared with the Welsh Government, UK Government and the local authorities' scrutiny committees.

DISCUSSION

The officer reported on the work that had been achieved over the year, celebrating the success of the developments seen despite it being a challenging year.

She was pleased to note that the number of business cases approved had increased and that developments were visible within projects such as the Enterprise, Engineering and Optics Centre and the Centre for Environmental Biotechnology+.

It was confirmed that the report detailed the fourth year of the Growth Deal, acknowledging that outside observations had been received that not enough had been achieved at present. The Chief Executive stressed that much had been achieved so far, considering that there has been a global Pandemic during the delivery period so far. It was elaborated that the duration of the Plan was 15 years with complex projects being developed. It was considered that the nature of the projects as well as the innovative mindset would future-proof the Region while also developing the economy. She expressed confidence that more projects would be approved in the coming year and subsequent years as there were robust procedures in place.

In response to these comments, it was agreed to include updates within the Quarterly Reports detailing key targets such as the number of business cases that have been

approved, the number of jobs that have been created and other performance indicators in order to be able to see if the Plan is progressing on time and to be able to compare the work with past and future years. In response, the Chief Executive confirmed that work would be undertaken in an effort to highlight this data in future reports as it would be useful to consider the information before submitting the Annual Reports.

10. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED to exclude the press and public from the meeting during the discussion on Item 11-14 as it is likely that exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 - Information relating to the financial or business transactions of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) will be disclosed.

There is an acknowledged public interest in openness in relation to the use of public resources and related financial issues. However, it is acknowledged that there are occasions, in order to protect financial and commercial interests that matters related to such information need to be discussed without being publicised. The report relates specifically to financial and business matters and associated discussions. The 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.

11. GLYNLLIFON RURAL ECONOMY HUB – WELSH SHEEP MILK BUSINESS JUSTIFICATION CASE

The report was presented by the Growth Deal Programme Manager.

RESOLVED

- 1. To approve the draft Business Justification Case for the Welsh Sheep Milk component of the Glynllifon Rural Economy Hub project and authorise the Portfolio Director, in consultation with the Chair, Vice-Chair, Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer to agree the final version after procurement and enter into a funding agreement with Grŵp Llandrillo Menai for the delivery of the project, subject to Grŵp Llandrillo Menai addressing the outstanding issues and securing all necessary internal approvals for the project.**
- 2. To note that there will be two further Business Case approvals to deliver the remaining elements of the Glynllifon Rural Economy Hub project which will be submitted to the Sub-Committee for consideration in the future.**

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To seek the Sub-Committee's approval of the Business Justification Case for the Welsh Sheep Milk component of the Glynllifon Rural Economy Hub project.

The draft Business Justification Case would be submitted to the Sub-Committee in July to enable a timely decision that would avoid delaying the delivery of the project. Procurement for the project was currently live and a decision was expected on 06/08/2025. The next meeting of the Sub-Committee was not until October 2025 and would result in a delay in delivering the project if the draft Business Justification Case and delegated authority were not approved.

DISCUSSION

The Report was discussed.

12. ADVANCED WIRELESS (CONNECTED CAMPUSES) FULL BUSINESS CASE

The report was presented by the Digital Programme Manager.

RESOLVED

- 1. To approve the Full Business Case for the Advanced Wireless (Connected Campus) project stating that the initial phase of grant scheme design following approval of the Full Business Case will require a final subsidy management assessment of the proposed Subsidy Scheme.**
- 2. To delegate the right to the Portfolio Director, in consultation with the Chair, the Vice-Chair, the Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer to agree the final design of the grant scheme.**
- 3. To delegate delivery of the project to the Portfolio Director including subsequent individual grant awards in line with the final grant scheme of up to £500,000, with individual grant awards between £500,000 and £1 million being made in consultation with the Chair, Vice-Chair, Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer.**

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To seek the Sub-committee's approval of the Full Business Case for the Advanced Wireless (Connected Campuses) Project.

The Economic Ambition Board had approved the Outline Business Case for the project on 20 September 2024. The project subsequently received approval of the assurance process from the Welsh Government. This enabled the Portfolio Management Office to move forward with the development of the Full Business Case.

North Wales Ambition had now completed market engagement prior to project approval and had submitted a Full Business Case to the Board for a final investment decision.

DISCUSSION

The Report was discussed.

13. ENTERPRISE, ENGINEERING & OPTICS CENTRE CHANGE REQUEST

The report was presented by the Growth Deal Programme Manager.

RESOLVED

- 1. To approve the request for change for the Enterprise, Engineering and Optics Centre project, making the following changes:**
- 2. That approval be given for an additional Growth Deal investment of £446,041 to enable the project to progress to the delivery phase, subject to the funding being fully spent within the 2025-26 financial year. This investment will generate a number of additional benefits, including confirmed match funding**

of £250,898 from Wrexham University and the creation of six full-time equivalent jobs for the region.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To seek the Sub-committee's approval to the request for change for the Enterprise, Engineering and Optics Center for additional Growth Deal investment.

DISCUSSION

The Report was discussed.

14. RESPONSIBLE ADVENTURE REQUEST FOR CHANGE

RESOLVED

- 1. To agree the request for change for the Responsible Adventures project, making the following changes:**
 - a. To approve the removal of the eBus element from the project scope**
 - b. To approve the process of developing and delivering a business case**
 - c. To confirm that the two remaining conditions imposed during approval of the Outline Business Case have been adequately met and that the project can proceed to submit business cases for funding approval in accordance with the phased delivery proposal in the change request.**
 - d. To request further detailed information on the proposed change request to replace the eBus element of the project with the development of a Forest Masterplan at Betws y Coed, to be submitted to the next Sub-Committee in October for consideration.**

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Requests for changes to projects by Project Funders are matters for the Sub-Committee to decide.

DISCUSSION

The Report was discussed.

The meeting commenced at 09:30 and concluded at 12:05.

Chair