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Meeting

NORTH WALES CJC ECONOMIC WELL-BEING SUB-COMMITTEE

Date and Time

9.30 am, FRIDAY, 13TH MARCH, 2026

Location

Virtual Meeting

For public access to the meeting, please contact us

Contact Point

Rhodri Jones

01286 679556

Rhodrijones1@gwynedd.llyw.cymru

NORTH WALES CJC ECONOMIC WELL-BEING SUB-COMMITTEE

Voting Members

Councillors

Gary Pritchard	Isle of Anglesey County Council
Nia Jeffreys	Cyngor Gwynedd
Julie Fallon	Conwy County Borough Council
Jason McLellan	Denbighshire County Council
Dave Hughes	Flintshire County Council
Mark Pritchard	Wrexham County Borough Council

Co-optee Members – Non Voting

Professor Edmund Burke	Bangor University
Professor Joe Yates	Wrexham University
Yana Williams	Coleg Cambria
Aled Jones-Griffith	Grŵp Llandrillo Menai
David Roberts	Chair of the Regional Skills Partnership
Edgar Wyn Owen	Eryri National Park

Constituent Council Chief Executives

Dylan Williams	Isle of Anglesey County Council
Dafydd Gibbard	Cyngor Gwynedd
Rhun ap Gareth	Conwy County Borough Council
Helen White	Denbighshire County Council
Neal Cockerton	Flintshire County Council
Alwyn Jones	Wrexham County Borough Council

Officers in Attendance

Alwen Williams	CJC Chief Executive
Mark Watkins	Interim Monitoring Officer
Claire Incedon	Deputy Monitoring Officer
Dewi Morgan	Chief Finance Officer
Hedd Vaughan-Evans	Head of Operations
Nia Medi Williams	Senior Operations Officer

A G E N D A

1. APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

To receive any declaration of personal interest.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

To note any items that are a matter of urgency in the view of the Chair for consideration.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

5 - 13

The Chair shall propose that the minutes of the meeting held on 06 February 2026 be signed as a true record.

5. FLINTSHIRE & WREXHAM INVESTMENT ZONE SKILLS PROGRAMME

14 - 22

Iain Taylor (Investment Zone Programme Manager) and Sian Lloyd Roberts & Rees Brown from the Regional Skills Partnership, to present the report.

6. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chair shall propose that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the discussions on the following items due to the likely disclosure of exempt information defined in Paragraph 14 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972: Information relating to the financial business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

While there is a public interest in transparency and accountability, this is outweighed at this stage by the need to protect commercially sensitive information given that disclosure would likely prejudice ongoing negotiations and the authority's ability to secure best value and protect the proper use of public funds.

7. WREXHAM GATEWAY OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE

David Mathews (Land and Property Programme Manager) to present the report.

8. PARC BRYN CEGIN, BANGOR, CHANGE REQUEST

Hedd Vaughan-Evans (Head of Operations) and David Mathews (Land and Property Programme Manager) to present the report.

9. EJNI FULL BUSINESS CASE

Meghan Davies (Energy & Net Zero Programme Manager) to present the report.

10. TRAWSFYNYDD INNOVATION BUSINESS AND SKILLS CENTRE OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE

Meghan Davies (Energy & Net Zero Programme Manager) to present the report.

11. GLYNLLIFON RURAL ECONOMY HUB SUSTAINABLE DAIRY DEVELOPMENT BUSINESS JUSTIFICATION CASE

Elliw Hughes (Growth Deal Programme Manager) to present the report.

12. ACADEMI CROESO PROJECT (PREVIOUSLY KNOWN AS TOURISM TALENT NETWORK PROJECT) CHANGE REQUEST

Elliw Hughes (Growth Deal Programme Manager) to present the report.

NORTH WALES CJC ECONOMIC WELL-BEING SUB-COMMITTEE
06/02/2026

Present:

Councillors: Councillor Mark Pritchard (Wrexham County Borough Council) (Chair)
Councillor Jason McLellan (Denbighshire Council) (Vice-chair).

Dave Hughes (Flintshire County Council), Nia Jeffreys (Cyngor Gwynedd) and Gary Pritchard (Isle of Anglesey County Council).

Co-opted Members: Professor Paul Spencer (Bangor University), Professor Joe Yates (Wrexham University), Aled Jones-Griffith (Grŵp Llandrillo Menai), David Roberts (Chair of the Regional Skills Partnership), Edgar Wyn Owen (Eryri National Park) and Dave Penrith (Non-executive Adviser).

Chief Executives of Constituent Councils: Dylan Williams (Isle of Anglesey County Council), Sioned Williams (Cyngor Gwynedd), Rhun ap Iarheit (Conwy County Borough Council), Helen White (Denbighshire County Council) and Richard Weigh (Wrexham County Borough Council).

Other officers present: Alwen Williams (Chief Executive of the North Wales CJC), Hedd Vaughan-Evans (Head of Operations), Dewi Morgan (Chief Finance Officer), Sian Pugh (Assistant Head of Finance), Sara Jane Jones (Senior Accountant), Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Mark Watkins (Temporary Head of Legal), Claire Incledon (Deputy Monitoring Officer), Colin David Mathews (Land and Property Programme Manager), Eilw Alaw Hughes (Growth Deal Programme Manager), Meghan Davies (Energy and Zero Net Manager), Nia Medi Williams (Resources and Operations Manager), Iain Taylor (IMT Consulting) and Rhodri Jones (Democracy Services Officer).

Observers: Wendy Boddington (Welsh Government) and Gareth Ashman (UK Government)

Others invited:

Item 10: Stephen McGregor and Jon Travis (Welsh Government)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:

- Councillor Julie Fallon (Conwy County Borough Council)
- Professor Edmund Burke (Bangor University) with Professor Paul Spencer deputising.
- Yana Williams (Coleg Cambria)
- Dafydd Gibbard (Cyngor Gwynedd) with Sioned Williams deputising.
- Alwyn Jones (Wrexham County Borough Council) with Richard Weigh deputising.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Declarations of personal interest for Item 10 were received from Wendy Boddington (Welsh Government Observer) and Gareth Ashman (UK Government Observers). It was noted that

it was a prejudicial interest and they left the meeting for the discussion on the item, after the introduction to the item and the opportunity for Members to ask further questions.

A declaration of personal interest for Item 11 was received from Professor Joe Yates (University of Wrexham). He noted that it was a prejudicial interest and he left the meeting for the item.

3. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair signed the minutes of the meetings held on 5 December 2025 as a true record.

5. NORTH WALES GROWTH DEAL - QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE AND RISK REPORT

The report was presented by the Head of Operations.

DECISION

- 1. To note the Quarter 3 Performance Report and updated Portfolio Risk Register.**
- 2. To approve the submission of the Quarter 3 Performance Report to the Welsh Government and UK Government, as well as the local authority scrutiny committees.**

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Quarterly reporting on progress against the North Wales Growth Deal is one of the requirements of the Final Growth Deal Agreement.

DISCUSSION

Members were guided through several highlights such as five projects from the Joint Committee's reserve list having been formally approved to be part of the Growth Deal. These were detailed to include a Business Justification Case for Society 5.0, North Anglesey Sites and Buildings, the Freeport Gateway and Outline Business Cases for the Prince Project and Venue Cymru Futures Project.

It was explained that a second Portfolio Review had been completed considering the projects reporting as red. It was noted that this had freed up £58 million of funding to be reinvested by this Sub-committee.

An update was given that two change requests had recently been approved, namely the Former North Wales Hospital site and the Responsible Adventures project. Pride was expressed that the Glynllifon Rural Economy Hub Grant Funding Agreement had also been approved in November 2025, confirming that local company OBR Construction had been appointed to construct the Dairy Sheep Wales site.

It was pointed out that two launch events had been held for the CanfodAu building of Wrexham University and Grŵp Llandrillo Menai's Academi Croeso.

Pride was expressed that two Non-executive Advisors had been appointed. It was explained that they would play a key role as Chair and Vice-chair of the new Business Advisory Board.

It was confirmed that the Holyhead Hydrogen Hub project was the only one currently under review as it reported red against the portfolio's delivery profile. However, it was noted that the funding for it had been earmarked. An update was given that work was being done to develop key matters and resolve risks to ensure that an Outline Business Case was developed on this project to ensure the project continued into the future. An update was shared that six projects were active, 10 had been approved but were not operational, 7 Business Cases were under development and 15 projects remained on the reserve list.

The Growth Deal investment was reported noting that approximately £27 million had been invested to date. An update was given that this was estimated to be approximately £30 million by the end of the current financial year due to projects developing faster and more Business Cases being developed and becoming operational. It was also noted that there was no update on the new jobs created through the projects in this report confirming that this would be updated by the Quarter 4 report.

It was stressed that the risk register was fully updated by the Portfolio Management Office on a regular basis. It was confirmed that there was no change in the risk rating from what had been reported in Quarter 2. It was added that four residual risks were reporting as red, namely private sector investment, spending objectives, statutory planning and consent and the economic context meaning that the risk profile remained high.

During the discussion, the following observations were made:

In response to comments about the information published regarding the jobs that had been created, the types of roles, their salary value and the area they were located in, the Head of Operations confirmed that a request had been shared with Members to investigate what information they wished to see. It was further elaborated that the Head of Operations had contacted Members with a breakdown of employment information, asking them to contact the Portfolio Management Office if they wished to receive additional information. It was acknowledged that no response had been received from Members to this request. It was confirmed that the request would be circulated following this meeting, with further requested information being incorporated into the Quarter 4 review.

Gratitude was expressed for the report.

6. 2026/27 BUDGET

The report was presented by the Assistant Head of Finance.

DECISION

- 1. To note the Growth Deal revenue budget for 2026/27.**
- 2. To note the funding contributions, including partner contributions, local government supplementary contributions and partner interest contributions.**
- 3. To note the Growth Deal capital budget for 2026/27.**

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The Growth Deal required an annual budget to operate effectively within the funding available.

DISCUSSION

Members were reminded that the Growth Deal budget had already been approved as part of the 2026/27 Budget report which had been presented to the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee at its meeting on 23 January 2026.

It was confirmed that the revenue expenditure budget for 2026/27 was in the region of £2.95 million explaining that this money came from the following sources:

- £470,000 partner contributions
- £240,000 local authority supplementary contributions
- £154,000 partner interest rates
- £660,000 of the Growth Deal grant earmarked for the revenue element
- £435,000 of the Growth Deal grant earmarked from the projects
- £987,000 from the resource fund.

It was explained that there was no increase in partner contributions because a decrease in the employer's pension contribution rate from 2026/27 offset the out-turn adjustment for 2025/26, and the salary inflation estimate for 2026/27.

It was highlighted that changes in projects in the capital profile had led to an overall increase in the estimated cost of borrowing in line with the calculation made in the 2025/26 budget. It was noted that some partners were leading Growth Deal projects themselves and that the associated cost of borrowing had been added to their interest rates. However, it was noted that the contributions were within the threshold approved in the Delivery and Funding Agreement.

An up-to-date spending profile for each project within the Growth Deal had been shared for the period between 2021/22 and 2034/35. The profile for the 2.15% that was used to fund the revenue budget had also been shared. It was stressed that the profile was based on the timeline of the latest projects noting that it would be constantly reviewed as business cases were approved.

Gratitude was expressed for the report.

7. 2025/26 REVENUE AND CAPITAL POSITION – END OF DECEMBER 2025 REVIEW

The report was presented by the Assistant Head of Finance.

DECISION

- 1. To note the end of December 2025 revenue review, including the reserves position.**
- 2. To note and accept the Growth Deal's revised capital expenditure profile.**

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

An underspend of £618,025 was projected against the Economic Well-being Sub-committee's revenue budget for 2025/26. The final underspend at the end of the financial year would be used to reduce the amount claimed from the North Wales Growth Deal grant and resource fund, and approval would be sought when the out-turn report was submitted to the CJC.

To note a slippage on the capital programme, with an estimated expenditure of £22.15m in 2025/26 compared with the approved budget of £29.61m for the year.

DISCUSSION

Members were reminded that this review of the revenue and capital position for 2025/26 had been approved as part of the '2025/26 Review' report which had been submitted to the Corporate Joint Committee at its meeting on 23 January 2026.

An estimate of the financial position of the Growth Deal had been provided, confirming that an underspend of £618,000 was projected by the end of the current financial year. It was noted that the review in July 2025 had predicted an underspend of £281,000, explaining that this increase was mainly due to further underspending in employee spending as well as additional government roles, accountable body Support services and projects.

An estimated balance of the Growth Deal funds was shared as of 31 March 2026 for information.

A revised capital profile for the Growth Deal was reported, explaining that there had been a net reduction of £7.46 million in the expected expenditure for 2025/26. This was noted to be due to slippages in some projects. However, it was confirmed that the development of projects such as Cydnerth, Environmental Biotechnology Centre and the Glynllifon Rural Economy Hub had contributed to reducing this underspend.

During the discussion, the following observations were made:

In response to comments about an underspend in employee spending, the Assistant Head of Finance confirmed that it was an underspend as it was not possible to appoint individuals to some posts until later in the year. It was elaborated that options on what to do with this underspend funding would be presented to Members at the end of the financial year. The Monitoring Officer noted that some budgets had been protected following the transfer arrangement of the Growth Deal in 2025.

There was concern that there was an underspend of approximately £618,000 within the Growth Deal, as Local Authorities were under pressure from a lack of effective budgeting. In response, the Chief Executive noted that Ambition North Wales did not have a regular and consistent core income and emphasised that its financial position was different from that of the Local Authorities.

Gratitude was expressed for the report.

8. FLINTSHIRE AND WREXHAM INVESTMENT ZONE - YEAR 2 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN (ADP)

The report was presented by the Chief Executive and IMT Consulting advisor.

DECISION

- **To approve the Annual Delivery Plan's investment allocations for Year 2 and note the Year 1 allocations that would be used as part of the Year 2 programme.**
- **To approve the Investment Zone Programme, including a £4m allocation to Wrexham University's Business Gateway project.**
- **To authorise the CJC's Section 151 Officer to sign and issue the ADP documents to the UK Government and Welsh Government and make any further non-material amendments necessary to agree the ADP with the UK Government and Welsh Government.**

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Investment Zones were required to agree on an Annual Delivery Plan with the UK Government and Welsh Government in the final quarter of the financial year to secure the annual payment from the Welsh Government in April in every financial year.

DISCUSSION

It was explained that the report noted the proposed Flintshire and Wrexham Investment Zone Year 2 Annual Delivery Plan programme for the 2026/27 financial year. Details were provided on work that had been undertaken during the first year and it was reported on the allocations that had been submitted to the UK Government and Welsh Government for Year 2, confirming that it was expected to be received in April 2026. Pride was expressed that this development ensured the continuity of development and momentum of the first year.

Members were reminded of the developments achieved within the first year, including establishing the governance structure of the Programme, forming the Programme's planning infrastructure as well as the initial development of the priority projects.

Members were guided through the allocations that had been submitted for Year 2, as well as the developments that were expected to be achieved for the Programme. It was emphasised that these targets had been formulated in line with the objectives of the Investment Zone as they related to the themes of infrastructure, skills, innovation and business support.

It was highlighted that this plan placed an emphasised on delivery, and that it reflected the change from the first year which had focused on establishing a robust procedure. A busy year was anticipated of incorporating the projects and procedures during Year 2.

It was reported that the proposed scheme incorporated minor changes agreed within the first year such as allowing £4 million to support Wrexham University's Business Gateway project.

It was confirmed that consultation had been undertaken with the leaders of Flintshire County Council and Wrexham County Council and that their input was having an impact on the governance of the Investment Zone. It was elaborated that consultations were a very important element of the Investment Zone, with every effort being made to ensure that it inspired young people, business owners and that all individuals who could benefit from the Investment Zone were aware of how they could do so. It was noted that some of the projects would be presented to Members to be able to sharpen the best way to promote them more widely.

It was announced that a Business Support Programme had recently been launched which was a Programme where Flintshire County Council and Wrexham County Council made the final decision on the projects selected. It was confirmed that the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee would continue to receive business cases for the major projects, with a Business Case for a bus network transformation project expected soon. It was noted that the Regional Skills Board would receive proposals from Wrexham University and Coleg Cambria before Members decided which proposals the Investment Zone could support.

It was detailed that several projects had been in development over the last 18 months, while the Investment Zone was being formed. It was explained that a Memorandum of Understanding was expected from the Governments to be able to co-ordinate the approval

of the Investment Zone programmes to be able to develop a grant proposal to assist the Programme.

During the discussion, the following observations were made:

It was confirmed that this was the first Investment Zone to be made outside of England. Gratitude was expressed to everyone who had developed it on a rapid scale, in the hope that the development would continue at the same pace in future.

Pride was expressed that the Investment Zone was being developed and that there was close collaboration between Flintshire County Council, Wrexham County Council and all partners who were developing it. Comments on the need to ensure that the work undertaken was effectively promoted were echoed.

Details were provided on allocations within the Investment Zone's 'Infrastructure' theme, noting support to increase capital contribution to up to £6 million to the Padeswood Siding project, subject to the change request process between the Welsh Government and the Ambition North Wales Growth Deal.

Gratitude was expressed to everyone who had worked to develop the Investment Zone so far, looking ahead to continuing to work together in future.

Gratitude was expressed for the report.

9. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

A vote was taken on the proposal to exclude the press and public, and Councillor Nia Jeffreys abstained her vote on this item.

The Chair shall propose 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 being open about the use of public resources and related financial matters. However, it was acknowledged that there were occasions, in order to protect financial and commercial interests, that such information needed to be discussed without being publicised. The report was specifically regarding financial and business matters together with associated discussions. The publication of such commercially sensitive information could adversely affect the interests of the bodies and the CJC 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.

10. PADESWOOD - REQUEST FOR CHANGE

The report was presented by Welsh Government and UK Government representatives.

RESOLVED

To support the request for change from the Welsh Government and allocate additional funding from the Growth Deal and Investment Zone, subject to:

1. Reaching an agreement on matters discussed in section 6.3(a) and (b) of the report.
2. That the investment noted in part 6.3(c) of the report will be a funding condition to be implemented prior to the approval of the Full Business Case and/or for it to be included in the Grant Funding Agreement, whichever comes first.
3. That the approval of the Full Business Case will be subject to the investment decisions in section 6.3(d).

To delegate to the Portfolio Director to discuss with the Welsh Government and UK Government the conditions imposed with final approval to be sought from the Economic Well-being Sub-committee (subject to the advice of the Monitoring Officer), in consultation with the Chair and Vice-chair.

That the Sub-committee notes that the splitting of funding between the Growth Deal and Investment Zone is the subject of separate discussions and decisions prior to the approval of the Full Business Case.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

In accordance with the change management process being implemented, to consider the request for change submitted and its implications.

DISCUSSION

The Report was discussed.

11. OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE - WREXHAM BUSINESS GATEWAY

The report was presented by representatives of the Growth Deal Programme Manager

RESOLVED

To approve the Outline Business Case for the Wrexham Business Gateway Project, subject to approval from the Welsh Government and UK Government of the assurance process held, and that Wrexham University addresses the matters noted in the report, as described in Section 7, and ask for a Full Business Case to be prepared for the Sub-committee's consideration.

To authorise the Portfolio Director in consultation with the Chair, the Vice-chair, the Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer to agree on draft terms in accordance with this report as a basis for the final funding arrangements for the project to be committed subject to Full Business Case approval.

That the approval from the Sub-committee is valid for a period of twelve months and should the project not proceed to an approved Full Business Case during this time, it will be required to return and re-present the business case to the Sub-committee for approval.

To note the intention to split the funding between the Growth Deal and Investment Zone and that this position will be confirmed at Full Business Case stage.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To seek the Sub-committee's approval of the Outline Business Case for the Wrexham Business Gateway from Wrexham University.

DISCUSSION

The Report was discussed.

The meeting commenced at 9:30 and concluded at 11:45.

Chair

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING SUB-COMMITTEE
13 March, 2026

TITLE: Flintshire & Wrexham Investment Zone Skills Programme
AUTHOR: Iain Taylor, Investment Zone Programme Manager
Sian Lloyd Roberts & Rees Brown, Regional Skills Partnership

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to present the Investment Zone Skills Programme and seek approval to the initial round of projects to the Economic Well-being Sub-Committee.

2. DECISION SOUGHT

- 2.1. The Economic Well-being Sub-Committee is asked to:

- Note the progress on implementing the Investment Zone programme in close partnership with the Local Education Authorities, Coleg Cambria, Wrexham University and the Regional Skills Partnership.
- Note the process for developing the projects contained in this report and that they have been agreed as suitable skills projects for the Investment Zone to support by the Regional Skills Partnership and are in line with the objectives of the Investment Zone Skills Plan.
- Approve the project proposals submitted by Coleg Cambria to a value of **£8,183,000** and delegate to Ambition North Wales Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair to agree and enter into a Grant Funding Agreement between the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee and Coleg Cambria.
- Approve the project proposals submitted by Wrexham University to a value of **£4,247,014** and delegate to Ambition North Wales Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair to agree and enter into a Grant Funding Agreement between the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee and Wrexham University.

3. REASONS FOR THE DECISION

- 3.1. To seek the Economic Well-being Sub-committee's approval for the Flintshire and Wrexham Zone Skills Programme. This will enable the start of the Investment Zone skills programme at the time the Investment Zone is agreed between Flintshire County Council, Wrexham County Borough Council, the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee, Welsh Government and UK Government.



4. BACKGROUND AND RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

4.1. Decisions regarding Investment Zone investment in skills and training are based on the following principles:

- in line with the Investment Zone Skills Strategy;
- delivered in facilities or by partners based in Flintshire and Wrexham; and
- accessible to all.

4.2. The Investment Zone Skills Plan

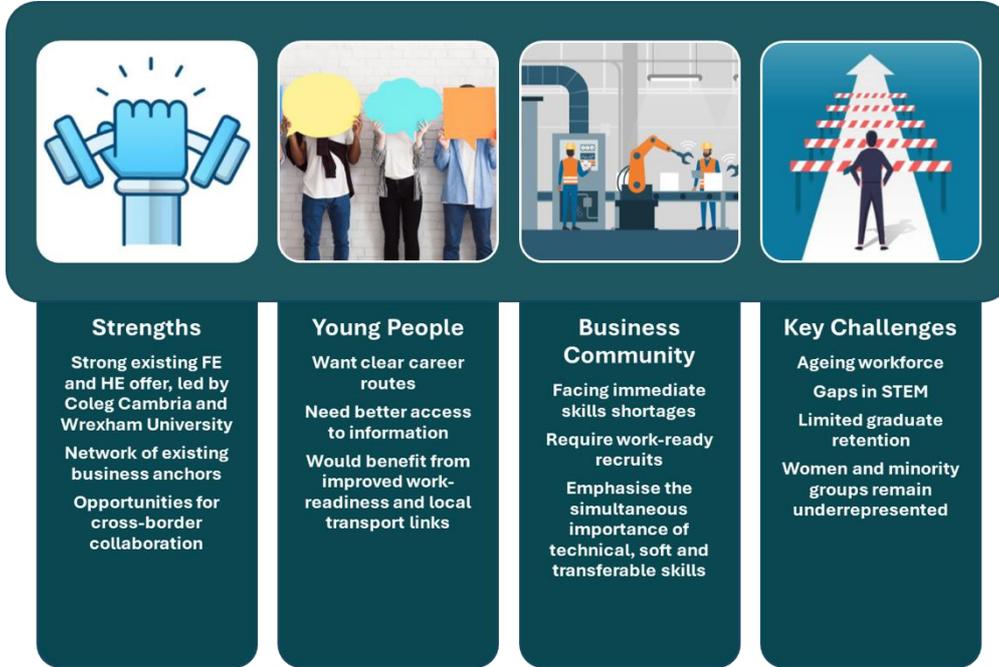
The importance of the Investment Zone opportunity for Flintshire & Wrexham can be summarised as promoting growth, inclusion and the enhancement of existing economic clusters.

- Flintshire & Wrexham has one of the strongest advanced manufacturing clusters in Wales, employing 19,000 people.
- The sector faces major opportunities through new technologies, but also risks around ageing workforce, skills gaps, and future workforce readiness.
- An inclusive approach is needed to widen access, attract underrepresented groups, and develop local career opportunities.

The role of a strategy is to shape decision-making by ensuring that access to opportunity is increased and business needs are met. In particular, this strategy sets out to:



The evidence underpinning the Skills Plan can be summarised as:



Key Investment Areas

The Investment Zone’s skills programme will focus on the following core themes and areas, which span across all stages of the sectoral employment pathway.

Intervention Theme	Intervention Areas
Increased engagement with pre-16 and Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careers engagement • Raising awareness of local opportunities • Expansion of STEM pathways • Pre-16 engagement
Support for 16-18 Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of apprenticeships • Work placements • Provision of employer incentives for apprenticeships • Alignment of training provision with sectoral needs • Employer-led Curriculum Co-Design
Enhanced Pathways for 18+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of degree apprenticeships • Creation of new MSc/PhD routes • Delivery of skills bootcamps and other micro-credentials • Employer led curriculum co-design
Upskilling & Reskilling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retraining for career transitions • Support for lifelong, and work-based learning



The effective governance of the Investment Zone skills programme will be co-ordinated by the North Wales Regional Skills Partnership, whilst delivery will be led by the Investment Zone Skills Steering Group. Given the long-term nature of the Investment Zone programme and the uncertainty surrounding the precise timing of future inward investment, the skills programme must remain agile and responsive and will therefore be shaped by Annual Delivery Plans to identify priorities, inform resource allocations and design monitoring activities.

5. INTRODUCTION TO THE INVESTMENT ZONE SKILLS PROGRAMME PROJECTS

5.1. Coleg Cambria Projects

Project 1 - Medru Skills Factory

The primary aim of this project is to address the immediate and future skills needs of the Advanced Manufacturing and Digital sectors in North Wales. It focuses on two key areas - Upskilling - Providing advanced training to existing employees to enhance their capabilities. Reskilling - Training new entrants to prepare them for careers in the sector. The project provides a range of training programs in Advanced Manufacturing, Digital, Management and Industry 4.0 areas.

Project duration: 5 years

Outcomes:

- Support at least 25 organisations to access Industry 4.0 and Advanced Manufacturing skills
- Establish 5 Toolbox Skills Centres
- Deliver 8 Skills Bootcamps
- Minimum 100 training courses
- Minimum of 1000 participants engaged or enrolled
- Minimum of 5 employers involved in co-designing courses.

Project 2 - Emerging Talent

The programme's overarching aim is to increase apprenticeship participation (L2-L6) by making the pathway more attractive to both individuals and employers. It will also enhance learner participation and awareness of apprenticeship opportunities in Flintshire and Wrexham. It will be a key enabler to updated provision linked to proposed apprenticeship changes and advances in the sector. This will drive growth in the advanced manufacturing sectors at all levels, including Aerospace, Digital, Pharmaceutical, Food & Drink, Papermaking and Mechanical/Electrical Engineering.

Project duration: 5 Years

Outcomes:

- 10 x SME Apprentices / year
- 15 x Higher Engineering Apprentices / year
- 10 x Digital Degree Apprentices



5.2. Coleg Cambria Budget Request

The request from Coleg Cambria is for £8,183,000 of which £1.5m is for capital costs. Table 1 illustrates the breakdown across the Medru Skills Factory and Emerging Talent projects.

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	Total
1. Medru Skills Factory	362,000	599,000	677,000	822,000	845,000	3,305,000
2. Aerospace Programme Development	65,000	65,000	65,000			195,000
2. Higher Engineering Apprenticeship	225,000	450,000	675,000			1,350,000
2. L3 Apprentices (SMEs)	135,000	270,000	270,000			675,000
2. Digital Degree Apprenticeship	90,000	180,000	270,000			540,000
2. Incentive Scheme for Employers: SME Achievement Grant			35,000			35,000
2. Incentive Scheme for Employers: HEA Attendance Grant	50,000	100,000	150,000			300,000
2. Capital Redevelopment at Cambria Deeside		100,000	1,400,000			1,500,000
2. SME Employer Engagement and Recruitment		35,000	36,000	37,000		108,000
2. SME Attendance Grant		25,000	50,000	100,000		175,000
Total	927,000	1,824,000	3,628,000	959,000	845,000	8,183,000

5.3. Wrexham University Projects

Project 1 - Degree Apprenticeships: Advanced Manufacturing (Level 6)

Project to increase access to high-quality, work-based higher education across the Flintshire and Wrexham Investment Zone, directly responding to the growing demand for Degree Apprenticeships in the region.

Project duration: 3 years

Outcomes:

- 12 Degree Apprenticeship Places every year, targeting minimum of 25 companies, mainly SMEs

Project 2 - Graduate Internships

Project to tackle one of the most persistent challenges facing the regional labour market: the difficulty of retaining graduate talent in North Wales and ensuring that businesses, particularly within advanced manufacturing, can access the skills they need to thrive. The offer includes 6- and 12-month graduate internships for those ready to step into more substantial roles, an 8-week summer placement scheme.

Project duration: 4 years

Outcomes:



- *6-month internships: 36; 12-month internships: 24; Summer placements: 32; Remote placements: 32*
Total of 124 participants

Project 3 - PhD & Masters Research

Project to enable local employees and graduates to undertake Masters, MRes and PhD-level research that aligns with real operational challenges and emerging technological priorities. Co-designed by employers, companies will gain access to high-level R&D.

Project duration: 5 years

Outcomes:

- 3 Phd & 6 MRes opportunities that focus on applied, industry-led research topics in advanced manufacturing, digitalisation, automation and low-carbon technologies. Subsidised Master places will support 48 individuals to undertake advanced study in areas linked to Investment Zone priorities.

Project 4 - Higher Education Co-Created Courses

The Higher Education Co-Created Courses project will establish a comprehensive programme of employer-led higher-level learning aligned to Advanced Manufacturing needs in Wrexham and Flintshire. Employers will shape every stage of course development to ensure relevance, practicality and direct application to the workplace. Provision will be offered through flexible delivery models that suit shift patterns, workplace scheduling and the specific requirements of SMEs and large employers.

Project duration: 5 years

Outcomes:

- Minimum 30 businesses leading to 300 participants completing employer-designed higher-level courses and micro-credentials.

5.4. Wrexham University Budget Request

Wrexham University is requesting **£4,247,014** of revenue funding from the Skills Revenue Allocations in the Investment Zone.

Financial Year	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30	Total
1. Degree Apprenticeships	334,000	345,000	355,000	-	1,034,000
2. Graduate Internships	341,200	358,260	376,173	404,982	1,480,615
3. PhD and Masters Research	268,000	179,000	179,000	118,000	744,000
4. Higher Education Co-created Courses	227,000	238,350	250,268	272,781	988,399
Total	1,170,200	1,120,610	1,160,441	795,763	4,247,014



5.5. Analysis of Funding Availability

The project requests above are fully funded by the IZ allocation as illustrated in Table 3 below. The proposals amount to a request of £12.43m over the 5 year period. The current skills allocations covering these areas provides for investment of £13.3m. Further projects (c£895k) in the skills theme are expected from LEAs and Independent providers.

Table 3 - Analysis of Investment Zone Skills Funding								
IZ Skills Theme (Annual Delivery Plan Theme)	Project Allocations from Table 1 and 2 Above					Proposal	Budget	Difference
	A Skills Funding to Complement existing funding arrangements	1,480,615	195,000	1,350,000	540,000			
B Training co-designed with employers	988,399	443,000	175,000	1,500,000	3,305,000	6,411,399	5,810,500	600,899
E Apprenticeships focused on Advanced Manufacturing	1,034,000	744,000	675,000			2,453,000	2,189,000	264,000
Total						12,430,014	13,324,634	(894,620)

Table Key and Summary	
Coleg Cambria (including £1.5m capital)	8,183,000
Wrexham University	4,247,014
Total	12,430,014

Note: Wrexham University has a further request of £3.645m relating to Skills and Innovation Vouchers will be brought forward via consultation with the North Wales Innovation Board.

6. ASSURANCE PROCESS & OUTCOMES

6.1. The contents of this report have been co-developed and agreed by the Investment Zone Skills Working Group. This group consists of the RSP, Medr (post 16 regulator), Flintshire and Wrexham Councils, Coleg Cambria and Wrexham University and Careers Wales. The process started in the summer of 2024 and was supported by the Investment Zone Skills Plan agreement in 2025. Partners met regularly to review evidence, test need and ensure alignment with regional skills and economic priorities.



- 6.2. This report has been presented to the Regional Skills Partnership for consideration. The financial allocations to the skills themes, as well as high level reference to the projects has been agreed by the Flintshire and Wrexham Investment Zone Working Group (the meeting of Council Leaders) and included in the Annual Delivery Plan agreed by the Economic Wellbeing Sub-Committee.
- 6.3. Future assurance will place strong emphasis on demonstrating clear additionality. Working closely with Medr, the region will use established and recognised methods to measure delivery against baselines and to assess which elements represent genuinely new or enhanced activity that Investment Zone funding enables, rather than continuation of existing provision. Providers will be required to submit comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation plans outlining delivery intentions, expected outcomes and justification for the added value delivered through Investment Zone support. Baseline assessment and additionality testing will be undertaken regionally, ensuring transparency, consistent oversight and alignment with the aims of the Investment Zone.

7. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. The legal implications relate primarily to the legal arrangements to secure the funds and manage the obligations arising from the Government's investment to the Corporate Joint Committee for the Investment Zone and the onward Grant Funding Agreement between the Corporate Joint Committee and the partner, in this case the Grant Funding Agreements with Wrexham University and Coleg Cambria. The expectation is that the approvals granted in this Report will be subject to a completed Investment Zone Memorandum of Understanding and an agreed Grant Offer Letter.
- 7.2. The projects set out in this Report will be contained with two Grant Funding Agreements, one with Coleg Cambria and one with Wrexham University. A Template Agreement has been prepared by Geldards LLP and will be modified, in agreement with the Corporate Joint Committee Monitoring Officer and partner's legal representation.
- 7.3. The relevant delivery requirements on the Corporate Joint Committee, as set out in the Investment Zone MOU, will be reflected in the two Grant Funding Agreements.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. The key financial implications relate to the resources to deliver these projects and the basis for how Wrexham University and Coleg Cambria will claim the funding from the Corporate Joint Committee. Investment Zone funding will be paid, in advance by Welsh Government to the Corporate Joint Committee via a Funding Offer Letter. This is expected to have been received by the time of the Economic Well-being Sub-Committee.
- 8.2. The project claims will be made on either a monthly or quarterly claim (to be agreed). The Government's evidence requirements for the claim will be required from the partner before the claim can be approved and paid.



- 8.3. The Report indicates that the projects can be afforded within the scope of the skills allocations agreed in the Annual Delivery Plan and Gateway documentation agreed and in support of the MOU. The level of investment is slightly accelerated relative to previous iterations of the budget in the first 5 years. This will be managed over the course of the programme to ensure there is a consistent programme of skills delivery that reflects the requirements of the sector and adapts to the wider need and funding context.

STATUTORY OFFICERS RESPONSE:

i. Monitoring Officer:

“I note the governance and assurance arrangements described in the report, including the intention to finalise the Investment Zone programme documentation and to put Grant Funding Agreements in place with appropriate monitoring and audit provisions. On that basis, I am content for the Sub-Committee to proceed with the approvals and delegations as set out.”

ii. Statutory Finance Officer:

“I have no objection to the decisions sought, and we will support the officers as the Investment Zone Skills Programme moves forward to delivery”.