

NORTH WALES CJC ECONOMIC WELL-BEING SUB-COMMITTEE
15/05/2026

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), Julie Fallon (Conwy County Borough Council) and Gary Pritchard (Isle of Anglesey County Council).

Co-opted Members: Professor Paul Spencer (Bangor University), David Roberts (Chair of the Regional Skills Partnership), Edgar Wyn Owen (Eryri National Park) and Dave Penrith (Non-Executive Adviser).

Chief Officers of Constituent Councils: Sioned Williams (Cyngor Gwynedd), Rhun ap Gareth (Conwy County Borough Council), David Fitzsimon (Flintshire County Council) and Alwyn Jones (Wrexham County Borough Council).

Other officers present: Hedd Vaughan Evans (Head of Operations), Sian Pugh (Assistant Head of Finance), Sara Jane Jones (Senior Accountant), Mark Watkins (Monitoring Officer), Eilw Alaw Hughes (Growth Deal Programme Manager), Iain Taylor (IMT Consulting), Ffion Williams (Senior Operations Officer) and Rhodri Jones (Democracy Services Officer).

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

Others invited:

Item 11: Martin James Jardine (Grŵp Llandrillo Menai)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:-

- Professor Edmund Burke (Bangor University) with Professor Paul Spencer deputising.
- Yana Williams (Coleg Cambria)
- Dylan Williams (Isle of Anglesey County Council)
- Dafydd Gibbard (Cyngor Gwynedd) with Sioned Williams deputising
- Helen White (Denbighshire Council)
- Neal Cockerton (Flintshire County Council) with David Fitzsimon deputising
- Dewi Morgan (Cyngor Gwynedd)

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

A declaration of personal interest was received from Councillor Gary Pritchard (Isle of Anglesey County Council) for Item 5, as he was a member of the 'Menter Môn' Board in his role as Leader of the Council, and the Holyhead Hydrogen Hub project was being discussed within the report. It was noted that it was not a prejudicial interest and he did not leave the meeting during the discussion.

A declaration of personal interest was received from Councillor Gary Pritchard (Isle of Anglesey County Council) for Item 12 regarding a discussion on the Business Justification

Case: North Anglesey Sites and Buildings. He did not leave the meeting for the discussion and did not vote on these decisions.

3. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair signed the minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2026 as correct.

5. NORTH WALES GROWTH DEAL – QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE AND RISK REPORT

The report was presented by the Portfolio Director

DECISION

- 1. To note the Q4 performance report and the updated Portfolio Risk Register.**
- 2. To approve the submission of the Quarter 4 Performance Report to the Welsh and UK Governments, along with the scrutiny committees of the local authorities.**

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

A number of highlights that had been achieved within this quarter were reported, such as the approval of three Outline Business Cases, the Full Business Case for the EGNi project, as well as several Requests for Change. He was pleased that an initial event had been held for the Dairy Sheep Wales project as well as the first investment panel meeting of the Clean Energy Fund, where the first projects for that fund had been approved.

He was pleased that 161 jobs had been created so far and explained that 63 of these were new jobs and 58 of them were construction jobs. These numbers were noted to be slightly higher than predicted. It was explained that the Members had received additional information about jobs data beyond the documentation of this meeting, and he explained that this information would be shared publicly when job numbers increased. It was acknowledged that they could not be shared publicly at present to ensure that no individuals could be identified from the information.

It was confirmed that the investment into the Growth Deal now stood at £30,652,413.01 noting that the total investment was now over £34.2 million, and he reported that this met the investment targets for the year. He elaborated that the projects had now secured over £7 million of revenue budget.

It was explained that 7 projects were now operational, acknowledging that this was less than the number of projects expected to be operational by the end of the year. He noted that there had been delays on some projects such as Parc Bryn Cegin. It was elaborated that some schemes had been delayed due to the political regulations of the Pre-Election Period: Senedd Cymru election, and it was hoped that those projects would be operational as soon as possible.

It was shared that there were 10 projects that had been approved but were not currently operational. The committee was assured that most of those projects were expected to be operational within six months.

It was also noted that Outline Business Cases were being developed for 8 projects. One project continued to report red at present, and was currently under review as a result, namely the Holyhead Hydrogen Hub. It was pleasing that the Outline Business Case had been developed and was being assessed jointly with external advisers.

The Portfolio Risk Register was detailed, confirming that the residual risks to 'affordability' and 'political change' had recently been increased following the war in the middle east and also the need to start working with new members of the Senedd following the election.

During the discussion, the following observations were made:-

The current Affordability risks following the war in the middle east were discussed. It was pointed out that the economic climate had changed significantly since 2020, when a Financial Agreement for the Growth Deal was agreed. In response to an enquiry on the discussions that were taking place with the UK and Welsh Governments regarding the 'expected outputs', the Portfolio Director confirmed that officers had been communicating with the Portfolio Board and the Chief Executives of the region's Councils in order to prepare a document highlighting the current situation and preparing for the future. It was explained that it was essential to ensure that future procedures were carefully designed to ensure that any plans that addressed the increase in costs and affordability were not harmed by further developments in the war. It was confirmed that no discussions had taken place with the Governments at this time, noting that officers were preparing for them. Members shared their desire for the discussions to take place as soon as possible. The Welsh Government Observer added that the Government was ready to hold these discussions with officers and was eager to seek solutions.

The members expressed their thanks for the report and for the detail of the data across the region. Some members shared that they would like to receive further data per county in the region in future, so that they could further justify the investment with their fellow local members, from the public funds. It was recognised that reporting this type of data could be challenging as some of the projects did benefit neighbouring counties and the region as a whole, even though they were based in another county. However, it was considered that the receipt of such information would encourage individual counties to identify new developmental and commercial opportunities, whilst also working towards the main regional targets. In response to the comments, the Portfolio Director reported that this type of information had not been presented within this type of report in the past, however, officers would make contact with members in order to obtain recommendations about the information they wished to receive within these quarterly reports in future, as the next report would reflect the first quarter of the year 2026/27. A discussion took place on this issue where a number of views were presented for and against the inclusion of this information within future reports including issues of population, transport and cross-county benefits.

The report was considered to be very positive, noting that it was vital to ensure that the public was aware of these achievements. In response to the comments, the Portfolio Director confirmed that there were many opportunities to inform the public of the successes, through press releases and events that were already underway, and he emphasised that this had not been possible in recent weeks because of the Pre-Election Period regulations of the Senedd Cymru Election.

The members expressed their thanks for the report.

6. REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUT-TURN POSITION FOR 2025/26

The report was presented by the Assistant Head of Finance

DECISION

- **To note the Growth Deal's out-turn position for 2025/26 noting that, due to underspending, £60,990 of the earmarked reserve would not be used, and that a smaller amount of £867,731 would be used from the North Wales Growth Deal grant, to show a neutral position for the year.**
- **To note the Growth Deal's reserves position.**
- **To note the Growth Deal's capital end of year review as at 31 March 2026.**
- **To note the Investment Zone's out-turn position for 2025/26.**
- **To note the Regional Skills Partnership's out-turn position for 2025/26.**

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To inform the Economic Well-being Sub-committee of the financial positions of the Growth Deal (including the Shared Prosperity Fund and Local Area Energy Plan), Investment Zone and Regional Skills Partnership for both revenue and capital in 2025/26.

DISCUSSION

The members were guided through the revenue and capital position for the Growth Deal, the Investment Zone and the Regional Skills Partnership for the 2025/26 financial year.

Final Net Out-turn Position

It was reported that the final net out-turn position was an underspend of £543,000, with the main underspend stemming from the 'employees' heading. It was elaborated that around £90,000 of this underspend was due to staff working a proportion of their time on the Corporate Joint Committee, £39,000 related to staff working on the Regional Skills Partnership and £156,000 related to staff that were funded by Growth Deal projects. It was confirmed that vacant posts had led to an underspend of around £255,000.

It was also noted that there was an underspend against the 'additional government roles' heading because, although appointments had been made during the year, it was explained that they were funded from the Resources Reserve therefore the budget of that fund had been adjusted to match the underspend. Reference was also made to an underspend of £181,000 on the supporting expenditure for projects.

It was highlighted that the main income streams for the year were: partner contributions, the North Wales Growth Deal grant, the Welsh Government energy grant, the Shared Prosperity Fund, the Earmarked Reserve and the Resources Reserve. The members were reminded that partner contributions were the only permanent source of funding for the Corporate Joint Committee and amounted to 20% of the full budget. It was reported that the contributions from partners had been approved as part of the Delivery and Funding Agreement by all relevant partners.

Reference was made to short-term funding sources such as the Growth Deal Grant. It was explained that half of the money received as part of this grant had been allocated to revenue expenditure, noting that it had already been used in the first five years of the

programme – with 10 years remaining. The importance of a diversity of funding sources for the future was emphasised.

Use of this underspend was being considered to leave a neutral position at the end of the year. It was noted that this could be done by reducing the contribution from the Growth Deal grant from £1,350,000 to approximately £868,000 and not using the Earmarked Reserve of £61,000. It was explained that these sources would be used to fund expenditure within subsequent years and would reduce the risk of needing to increase partner contributions in the near future.

Reserves

The movement in reserves during the year was reported, including the balances of those funds at 31 March 2026.

The Officer reminded everyone that an Interest Reserve of approximately £5 million had been set aside to fund borrowing costs in the coming years, noting that this balance had been taken into account when calculating the partners' borrowing costs in the 2026/27 financial year budget.

The balance of the Resources Reserve was confirmed to be £4.4 million at 31 March 2026, reporting that around £1 million had been earmarked for use in the 2026/27 budget.

Growth Deal's Final Capital Position

It was reported that £30.64 million of expenditure had been made on the Growth Deal by the end of the 2025/26 financial year. It was noted that this was a net reduction of £14.28 million compared to the budget approved in February 2025, following a slippage on projects. However, it was noted that expenditure on the Cydnerth project had been made earlier than forecast, with £8.87m showing under the 2025/26 expenditure rather than between two financial years as had originally been profiled. It was confirmed that the Growth Deal budget allocated for revenue expenditure in 2025/26 had been reduced to £0.87 million to reflect the final revenue out-turn figures.

Investment Zone's Actual Expenditure and Income

It was explained that expenditure of around £323,000 was noted against Flintshire and Wrexham County Council on the documentation, but following more recent information, it was confirmed that this figure would be adjusted to £230,000 by the time the information was submitted finally for approval. It was mentioned that the original figure included £93,000 of commitments which would be shown as part of 2026/27 spending. The Officer elaborated that the sum of Investment Zone Grant used would also be adjusted to reflect this, so that it would not affect the net position for the year.

The Regional Skills Partnership

It was confirmed that the partnership's financial situation showed a neutral position for the year, with expenditure of £290,000 being funded by Welsh Government grant funding.

It was confirmed that the information presented within this report would be submitted to the Governance and Audit Sub-Committee on 4 June before final approval by the Corporate Joint Committee on 19 June.

During the discussion, the following observations were made:-

In response to an enquiry, the Assistant Head of Finance confirmed that underspend remained in reality, although a neutral position on the 2025/26 balances could be confirmed. However, she noted that this underspend of £543,000 enabled the financial sources identified within the report to remain available into the future.

The members expressed their thanks for the report.

7. NORTH WALES GROWTH DEAL – COST INFLATION RESERVE

The report was presented by the Portfolio Director.

DECISION

To agree to establish a Cost Inflation Reserve for 2026/27 and provide an initial £3.96m of Growth Deal funding to this reserve.

To approve the criteria set out for the Cost Inflation Reserve and the delegated decision matrix.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To propose the establishment of a Cost Inflation Reserve to support approved projects (Business Justification Case or Full Business Case approval) with increased costs that cannot be mitigated in order to ensure that projects move into delivery during 2026-27. An initial £3.96 would be allocated to the Cost Inflation Reserve (to be reviewed in six months' time) leaving £28m of unallocated funding available to Reserve List projects.

DISCUSSION

It was explained that the purpose of the report was to establish a Cost Inflation Reserve to assist the development of projects throughout the financial year, following affordability challenges as noted earlier within this meeting. It was considered that setting up this fund would ensure that the pace of delivery for projects could be maintained and momentum gained into the future as more Business Cases were approved. It was noted that the establishment of this fund stemmed from experiences gained when projects had been delayed following the war in Ukraine, and to prevent such a delay in future.

It was proposed that £3.96 million of unallocated funding from the Reserve be allocated to establish the fund, with this to be reviewed in six months. It was emphasised that £28 million would remain available for the Reserve List.

It was confirmed that specific criteria would be used to determine if projects were eligible for a budget. It was noted that the fund targeted projects that were already partially developed, with procurement phases completed and a supplier identified. It was elaborated that projects would be required to conduct negotiations with suppliers to reduce costs where possible, in order to qualify for funding from this reserve. It was emphasised that any allocation from the reserve to a project must directly lead to the successful delivery of that project.

It was reported that the Growth Deal contribution towards the additional funding would be capped at the existing percentage intervention rate, where the Growth Deal was a minority funder in the project. In contrast, where the Growth Deal was the majority funder in a project, the Growth Deal contribution towards the additional funding from this reserve would be capped at 50% of the additional funding required. It was emphasised that these constraints had been very valuable in the past to ensure that project costs were shared with project sponsors, and were a successful means of ensuring that projects developed effectively.

It was explained that procedures would be in place to delegate decisions on the expenditure of the reserve to officers, in cooperation with the Chair, Vice-Chair and statutory officers.

During the discussion, the following observations were made:-

There was concern that the use of this reserve would lead to the extension of projects that might have been rejected within a better economic climate, noting that this would remove budgets from those projects where there was a certainty they would become operational. It was noted that risk management was necessary to ensure that money was not wasted.

Comments were received from the Non-Executive Adviser who highlighted that acting quickly in times where the economic climate was challenging, as cost inflation occurred gradually over time, would negate its effects.

The members expressed their thanks for the report.

8. FLINTSHIRE AND WREXHAM INVESTMENT ZONE: INITIAL INNOVATION PROGRAMME PROJECTS

The report was presented by the Investment Zone Programme Manager

DECISION

- 1. To note progress on establishing and implementing the Investment Zone Innovation programme in close partnership with Wrexham University, AMRC, Bangor University and Net Zero Industry Wales.**
- 2. To note the process for developing the projects contained in this report and that they have been agreed as suitable innovation projects for the Investment Zone to be supported by the North Wales Innovation Board.**
- 3. To approve the project proposal submitted by Wrexham University to a value of £3,645,364 and delegate authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer, the Chair and Vice-chair to agree and enter into a Grant Funding Agreement between the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee and Wrexham University.**
- 4. To approve the project proposal submitted by Bangor University to a value of £1,300,000 and delegate authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer, the Chair and Vice-chair to agree and enter into a Grant Funding Agreement between the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee and Bangor University which specifically reflects an agreement to implement any recommendations arising from the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee Project Review of the Growth Deal Digital Signal Processing Centre (DSP) Project.**
- 5. To approve the project proposal submitted by Net Zero Industry Wales to a value of £260,000 and delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer, Chair and Vice-chair to agree and enter into a Grant Funding Agreement between the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee and Net Zero Industry Wales on behalf of the local Industrial**

Decarbonisation Partnership (including NEWID and the Deeside Decarbonisation Forum).

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To seek the Economic Well-being Sub-committee's approval for the first three projects within the Flintshire and Wrexham Zone Innovation Programme. These projects were aligned with the emerging Investment Zone supported innovation projects currently underway with AMRC and BIC Innovation to create an Investment Zone Innovation Programme and explore the feasibility of a National Manufacturing Institute for Wales in North East Wales.

DISCUSSION

It was explained that three projects had been developed in collaboration with Flintshire County Council, Wrexham County Borough Council and projects to connect commercial companies with research and innovation sources to help them identify their challenges, expand connections and encourage innovative growth of their companies.

It was confirmed that these projects included the Wrexham University project, which had been under the auspices of the Regional Skills Partnership and the North Wales Innovation Board. It was explained that it was an innovative project to enable the university to provide support and research to companies, without accruing costs.

Reference was made to a project by Bangor University that encouraged companies to address their data and connectivity challenges. It was noted that this project would lead on the best approaches to improving connectivity across the region. It was explained that this project allowed companies the time to hold meetings with the university in order to understand any current problems and work together in the future to resolve them.

It was reported that the third project was the Net Zero Industry Wales project, which supported businesses with procedures to achieve carbon emission reductions and plans to become net zero carbon.

It was confirmed that detailed information about the projects was available within the report, with applications and further information to be found in the appendices. It was emphasised that those appendices were exempt for the attention of the Members only because they contained commercially sensitive information.

The members expressed their thanks for the report.

9. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chair proposed 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 relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

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

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

10. THE FUTURE OF VENUE CYMRU – CHANGE REQUEST AND UPDATED OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE: MARCH 2026

The report was presented by the Portfolio Director and the Growth Deal Programme Manager.

RESOLVED

To approve the change request and the updated Outline Business Case for Venue Cymru, giving Conwy County Borough Council an additional six months to address the outstanding issues, and to submit a Full Business Case for consideration by the Sub-Committee.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Requests for changes to projects by Project Funders were matters for the Sub-committee to decide.

Approving the Change Request would enable the Venue Cymru Futures project to proceed with a realistic, achievable timescale, aligned with the confirmed funding, operational constraints and best practice delivery advice, whilst safeguarding the long-term benefits.

DISCUSSION

The Report was discussed.

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

The report was presented by the Growth Deal Programme Manager.

RESOLVED

- 1. To note the progress and outstanding matters since the approval of the Business Justification Case in March 2026.**
- 2. To reaffirm approval of the Business Justification Case for the Sustainable Dairy Development Element of the Glynllifon Rural Economy Hub project, subject to the Welsh and UK Governments' approval of the assurance process undertaken, and that Grŵp Llandrillo Menai addresses the matters identified in the report and secures all the necessary internal approvals for the project.**
- 3. To delegate to the Portfolio Director, in consultation with the Chair, Vice-chair, Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer to agree and confirm the outstanding matters in the report before the funding is released. If there is an expectation to re-procure the project, then the Business Justification Case shall be resubmitted for consideration.**
- 4. To note that a funding agreement has already been entered into with Grŵp Llandrillo Menai for the Glynllifon Rural Economy Hub project following the approval of the Sheep Milk Wales Business Justification Case, and that this agreement will include the delivery of this element of the wider project if this Business Justification Case is approved by the Sub-committee.**

5. To note that there will be one more Business Case approval to deliver the outstanding elements of the project.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To seek the Sub-committee's approval of the Business Justification Case for the Sustainable Dairy Development Element of the Glynllifon Rural Economy Hub Project.

DISCUSSION

The Report was discussed.

12. REQUEST TO EXTEND THE VALIDITY PERIOD FOR THREE LAND AND PROPERTY PROGRAMME PROJECTS

The report was presented by the Portfolio Director, in the absence of the Land and Property Programme Manager.

RESOLVED

To approve the request to extend the Validity Period to complete the Grant Funding Agreements by three months for the following Land and Property projects:

Project Name	Date of approval by Economic Well-being Sub-Committee	6-month review date	Revised review date
Business Justification Case + North Anglesey Sites and Buildings	3 October 2025	2 April 2026	1 July 2026
Business Justification Case + Freeport Gateway	3 October 2025	2 April 2026	1 July 2026
Business Justification Case + Port of Mostyn	5 December 2025	4 June 2026	3 September 2026

To note that if the relevant Grant Funding Agreements have not been completed by the revised review dates, the relevant business case will need to be resubmitted to the Sub-Committee for further consideration and approval.

To confirm that the Portfolio Director is authorised to take all necessary operational steps to proceed with and complete the Grant Funding Agreements within the extended Validity Periods, subject to customary legal, financial, procurement and governance requirements.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To seek the Sub-committee's approval to extend the review date for the Grant Funding Agreement by three months for the reasons set out in the report.

DISCUSSION

The Report was discussed.

The meeting commenced at 09:30 and concluded at 11:20.

Chair