

GWYNEDD COUNCIL

REPORT TO A MEETING OF GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET

Date of Meeting:	18 September, 2018
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Ioan Thomas, Cabinet Member – Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Iwan T. Jones, Corporate Director
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Title of Item:	Economic Development Performance Report

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to update my fellow members on what has been happening in the fields within my remit as Cabinet Member for Economic Development. This includes outlining progress against the pledges within the Council's Plan; the progress of the performance measures; and the latest in relation to the plans for savings and cuts.
- 1.2 I will remind you that all matters have already been the subject of discussions and have been scrutinised at meetings of the Economy management team, which also included a representation from the scrutiny committee.
- 1.3 We have now started to implement the Council Plan 2018-23 that was approved at the Full Council meeting in March this year. Here, I report on progress since April 2018 until the end of June 2018.
- 1.4. In recent months, emphasis has been placed on the continuation of some projects and establishing new projects that are part of the 2018-2023 Plan. On the whole, I am satisfied with the performance of most projects and they are all on the right track. The work of establishing some of the new projects has been slow but I am comfortable that the right arrangements are now in place and I look forward to seeing the commencement of activity. However, some fields need to be addressed further - whether it be through the department's work or broader work by the Council. I will be elaborating on the matters in my report:

2. DECISION SOUGHT

2.1 To accept and note the information in the report.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

3.1. In order to ensure effective performance management.

4. COUNCIL PLAN PROJECTS

4.1. Create High Value Jobs (£26,500 + salary)

4.1.1. ***This project will look at targeting sectors which pay well by creating an environment which supports new businesses and grows existing businesses. The project will focus on attracting investment in strategic sites such as the Trawsfynydd Power Station, Llanbedr Airfield and Parc Bryn Cegin/Parc Menai.***

4.1.2 This project has faced a challenging period over the past few months, with a number of companies that were supported over the years moving out of the county. A lack of business space is also continuing to be an obstacle, and cases can be seen where prospective investors choose to start their businesses in other places. Although the North Wales Growth Bid considers developing property and land for businesses as one of its priorities, this matter is something that I am eager to discuss further with the department over the next few months in order to consider what we can do to improve the situation.

4.1.3 The project is continuing to work to attract new development to the Trawsfynydd site, with the UK Government's Nuclear Sector Bargain proposing firm indications that there is potential to locate SMR small reactor technology in Trawsfynydd. The Bargain was officially launched in Trawsfynydd in June.

4.1. The work of developing the Llanbedr site continues and funding from the Welsh European Funding Office has been confirmed, and the Council has also identified a contribution of £500,000, if the application is successful. The application for planning consent will be submitted to the Park's Planning Committee in September.

4.2. Businesses receiving support to Prosper

4.2.1 ***The purpose of the project is to ensure an operational approach in the Council which places the needs of businesses at the centre and attempts to remove obstacles so that they can establish and grow in the county.***

4.2.2 This is a new project, and it will operate on a cross-departmental basis. The county's businesses are involved with many Council Departments and they receive a service from them, including rates, planning, trading standards, building control and procurement. The work of obtaining feedback from businesses asking them what type of support they require has been commenced. Also, work has commenced on discussing and scoping the project with relevant departments.

4.3. Arloesi Gwynedd Wledig Programme

4.3.1 ***The purpose of this programme is to build on the good work which has already been done to transform the rural economy by introducing innovation within traditional sectors (such as agriculture and tourism) as well as supporting the investment of digital infrastructure, giving particular attention to the Dwyfor and Meirionnydd areas.***

4.3.2 A number of small exciting innovative developments have received support since I last reported to you. The plans include virtual technology to promote an understanding of dementia; supporting restaurants to take advantage of the Brailsford Way; and trialling electric cars in the countryside. We have also been successful in receiving funding from Welsh Government to set up public computers in community buildings in the countryside, and to set up public wi-fi systems in rural communities. The work of identifying communities to take part in the scheme has commenced.

4.3.3 I feel that further work is needed to seek to capture and consider the impact of these trials in the long term, as I am eager for us to secure the future of these plans, beyond their trial period. I have also noted that there is less interest/activity in the Dwyfor area with this project, and, I am keen for the Department to seriously examine the area and see whether we can respond to this.

4.4. Implementing the Gwynedd Slate Heritage

4.4.1 ***The purpose of the project is to deliver a programme of regeneration activities in the slate areas, and continue to work to secure a World Heritage Site status for the slate industry in Gwynedd.***

4.4.2 Work to submit an application for a World Heritage site designation continues and the UK Government has agreed to receive the nomination in September, and submit it to UNESCO in January 2019, subject to a satisfactory 'technical evaluation'.

4.4.3 Substantial progress can be seen with the work of implementing regeneration activities in the Caernarfon area, as work to construct the Snowdonia Railway Station and the Galeri extension is coming to an end. The tendering process to develop the Slate Quay was undertaken over summer and work will commence in September.

4.4.4 This year, this programme is also considering Bangor regeneration projects. Confirmation has been received that Bangor is a regeneration priority on a regional level by means of Welsh Government funding. The Bangor Strategic Partnership has been set up to lead on this work, and the Partnership's priorities have been formulated. The challenge will be to maintain momentum with this work and I will be monitoring this over the next few months. I also suggested that the department should give a presentation at the next Ogwen/Bangor Forum in order to raise awareness of the priorities that have been set.

4.5. Increase the Benefits of Major Events

4.5.1 ***The purpose of this project is to attract nationally or internationally high-profile events to Gwynedd in order to take advantage of the economic and social benefit which will ensue.***

4.5.2 Since April, the project has been promoting a support package for 2018/19 events, and response has been good so far, with 23 events receiving support during the period.

4.6 Benefiting from Tourism

4.6.1. ***The purpose of this project is to look at the possibility of getting visitors to contribute financially to maintaining and enhancing Gwynedd destinations and raising the standards of the tourism sector. By doing so, we will improve the provision of the county's destinations and increase the standard of the provision for the tourist industry.***

4.6.2. The work of scoping this project is only in its early stages, but tasks and milestones for the year have been determined. It is intended to hold a workshop with the tourism sector in September in order to ascertain opinion and assist with work to set a direction for the project.

4.7 More Gwynedd residents playing a full part in the world of work

4.7.1. ***The purpose of this project is to focus on a series of activities in order to get more Gwynedd residents into full time work, thereby reducing inactivity and unemployment.***

4.7.2. This project continues to operate a package of activities that reduces the risks Gwynedd residents face when seeking work or access to services. The AdTRAC package targets young people aged 16-24 who are not in employment, education or training. AdTRAC works with 80 young people in this situation, and since April three have moved into employment and 15 have been accepted into College for September. Considering how far some of these young people are from the labour market, I feel that this is a positive result and has made a huge difference to their lives.

4.7.3. A piece of work was commissioned to examine poverty in employment in the county in order to analyse this matter. This work will provide evidence for us about this situation, along with the main matters that require attention. I will be reporting further to you on this work next time.

5. MEASURING PERFORMANCE

5.1. **Appendix 1** reports on performance measures that are associated with my portfolio.

5.2. I am comfortable that the department is on the right track in terms of performance measures, but I am eager to hold a further discussion with the department as they draw up measures for the next Business Plan.

5.3. The department collects field measures (where more than one service feeds into the measure) and measures for each service.

Field Measures

Secured Grants / Match-funding for the county - Up to the end of June 2018, it can be seen that £9.6m was attracted to the county via the infrastructure scheme at the Snowdonia Airspace Centre in Llanbedr.

Number of jobs created from initiatives in receipt of support - 11 jobs were created by initiatives from April to June which was the result of leasing work units.

Service Measures

- 5.4. The **Business Support Service** provides information, advice and support for businesses so that they can establish, be competitive and develop in Gwynedd. The service is responsible for implementing, managing and promoting loan funds such as the Caernarfon Town Centre Loans Fund and the Bangor Area Fund.
- 5.5 The '**Business enquiries acted upon**' measure shows that the number of business enquiries has fallen (**56**) compared to previous years due to a lack of financial schemes. Despite this, the unit has commenced a marketing campaign to raise awareness of the Town Centre Loans Funds. The number of enquiries for loans coming from Bangor is low, and it appears that confidence is low on the high street. I have already referred to the 'Implementing the Gwynedd Slate Heritage' project and the work undertaken by the Strategic Partnership in Bangor. I will be monitoring the situation over the coming months to see if there are other specific obstacles affecting the number of people applying for loans in Bangor. Also, the interest-free Loans Fund for the Penygroes and Bethesda areas has been launched and is now operational, and enquiries have already been received in relation to bringing redundant buildings back into use.
- 5.6. Another matter that I have already raised when discussing the Creating High Value Jobs project is that there is a lack of space for businesses that want to extend or move to the area. The '**Council owned industrial / commercial space that is full**' measure reiterates this obstacle, and it shows that **95%** of our industrial units are full.
- 5.7. Since April, the **Maritime and Country Parks Service** has continued with the detailed dredging work programme for Pwllheli Harbour. The intention is to undertake dredging work during the period between October 2018 and April 2019. Figures for the Service's measures have not yet been collected.
- 5.8 The purpose of the **Tourism, Marketing and Events Service** is to maximise the benefit and value of tourists to Gwynedd's economy. The work of creating a tourism Snowdonia Mountains and Coast website continues, with the intention of including the details of more than 2000 businesses on the website. One of the main measures is the **number of visitors to the Snowdonia Mountains and Coast website**. The beta version of the website is about to be released for the sector to have an input, with the intention of going live within the next few months. This work has taken longer than anticipated, but I am comfortable that this has been beyond the control of the service unit. One of the main pieces of work that is in the pipeline is to undertake a 2018 accommodation review. Funding has already been obtained and work has commenced.

6. FINANCIAL/SAVINGS SITUATION

6.1 In general, the department is making acceptable progress towards realising the schemes for 2018/19 and 2019/20 as well, therefore, I have no matter to raise here.

7. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

7.1. None to note.

8. ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

8.1. Views of the Statutory Officers:

ii. Monitoring Officer:

"No comment from a propriety perspective."

iii. Head of Finance Department:

"I can confirm the accuracy of the financial aspects in the Cabinet Members report, and it's encouraging to see in section 6 that there has been an acceptable work in realising all the plans in the portfolio."

8.2. Views of the Local Member:

8.2.1 Not a local matter.

8.3. Results of Any Consultation:

8.3.1 None to note.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Measures of the Economy & Community Department (Economic Development)