Cyd-Bwyllgor Corfforedig Gogledd Cymru
North Wales Corporate Joint Committee

NORTH WALES CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEE

13 June, 2025

TITLE: Flintshire and Wrexham Investment Zone

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress of a new Investment Zone in Flintshire and Wrexham focused on Advanced Manufacturing. Much of the report is to provide an update on the Investment Zone elements, but decision is requested on the principles of how the Investment Zone will be established and decisions and delegations taken.

2. DECISION SOUGHT

2.1. The CJC is asked to:

- Accept the Update Report.
- Review the proposed outline arrangements for the Flintshire and Wrexham Investment Zone Advisory Board at Section 3.7 and advise on the proposal.
- Review the proposed Delegation and Decision Framework at Section 3.10 and advise on the proposal.
- Request a further report with detailed proposals following the Inter Authority Workshop.

3. REASON FOR THE DECISION

3.1. The process for developing Investment Zones is collaborative in nature and relies on the sharing of documentation for review across local stakeholders, Welsh Government and UK Government (MHCLG).

3.2 Overview of Year 1 of the Investment Zone (April 2025 - March 2026)

The immediate focus of Year 1 (2025-2026) is on securing the Investment Zone Programme via Memorandum of Understanding Agreements with Welsh Government and UK Government, allowing for the Year 1 funding to be secured and commencing with the delivery of the Investment Zone. The aim is to have achieved full sign off by September 2025. This includes the publication and activation of the Investment Zone Tax Sites.

The immediate delivery focus is on the following:

- **formalising the delivery team -** this includes appointing AMION to undertake a programme management role for the CJC working closely with Flintshire and Wrexham to ensure Government's requirements are in place and the Year 1 and Flintshire and Wrexham Council's individually appointing (following a recruitment exercise) Investment Zone leads for their area. The two Councils will establish the Investment Zone Planning Unit.
- **establishing the governance structure -** establishing and managing the Advisory Board and Working Groups.
- **progressing key project business cases** - ensuring that the identified projects make progress through the CJC assurance process and come forward for decision.
- **launching the Investment Zone Skills Programme -** securing approval to the Investment Zone Skills Plan by the Regional Skills Partnership and ensuring project awards to key delivery partners.
- **launching the Investment Zone Business Support Programme -** the grants programme available to manufacturing businesses across Flintshire and Wrexham.
- **securing the business case for bus transformation -** the appointment of Transport for Wales to undertake the business case and procurement specification for bus services awarded by the two Councils in Years 2-10.
- **Innovation delivery** - partnerships with key innovation delivery partners (including Airbus, Wrexham University, Bangor University and Coleg Cambria)

3.3 Overview of Gateway 4

Gateway 4 was submitted in early May 2025, and set out how the 'on menu' interventions proposed have the potential to address the constraints and barriers to growing the Advanced Manufacturing sector in Flintshire and Wrexham. The Gateway response was comprised of a primary textual document covering issues such as additionality, strategic alignment with other non-IZ interventions and details of stakeholder engagement and potential match funding, and was also supported by a technical spreadsheet. The Gateway 4 spreadsheet explored the intervention funding allocations across the Tax and NNDR sites and other flexible spend themes, as well as the corresponding outputs and outcomes.

Table 2 below provides a summary of the indicative spend profile co-developed as part of the Gateway 4 submission. The proposal is for the allocation of occupier benefits to be reviewed at the Investment Zone mid-point. If further provision is necessary, this can be part of an Investment Zone wider review of intervention allocations looking at the evaluation of strengths of delivery and impact.

Figure 1 below sets out the range of outputs and impacts expected from the Investment Zone programme.

Feedback on the Gateway 4 is expected in June 2025. Any material changes that are required to the interventions set out in Table 1 will come back to the CJC for approval.

3.4. Updated Maps

There has been a review of the Tax Maps provided in support of Gateway 2. The revised maps, taking feedback and clarifications into account are included in ***Appendix 1*** for information. The locations are unchanged, with minor amendments to boundaries.

3.5. Overview of Gateway 5

The team are currently preparing Gateway 5 for submission. The key elements of Gateway 5 are:

- Investment Zone Milestones
- Investment Zone Programme, to be prepared and provided to a future CJC meeting
- Investment Zone Risk Register, to be prepared and provided to a future CJC meeting

The high-level milestones for Year 1 are set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1 - Key Milestones	
Milestone	Indicative Date (by)
Agreement to Gateway 4	18 July 2025
Submission of Gateway 5	30 June 2025
Skills Plan Approved by the Regional Skills Partnership	30 June 2025
Interim Advisory Board Programme Established	30 June 2025
Agreement to Gateway 5	31 July 2025
Agreement to the MOU	31 August 2025
Submission of the Year 1 Delivery Plan, including Tax Site Delivery Plan	31 August 2025
Agreement to Year 1 Delivery Plan	30 September 2025
Year 1 Grant Offer Signed	30 October 2025
Investment Zone Tax Maps Published	15 November 2025
Retained Rates Investment Funds Agreed	20 December 2025
Year 2 Delivery Plan Agreed with Working Group	20 December 2025

Table 2 - Gateway 4 – Indicative Spend Profile											
	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33	2033-34	2034-35	Total
Revenue											
Planning	£1,035,000	£990,000	£1,110,000	£1,020,000	£975,000	£850,000	£790,000	£760,000	£700,000	£670,000	£8,900,000
Skills	£1,091,700	£2,280,422	£2,018,422	£2,126,422	£2,126,422	£2,126,422	£2,126,422	£2,126,422	£2,126,422	£2,126,422	£20,275,500
Business or Stakeholder Support	£667,900	£517,900	£717,900	£717,900	£717,900	£730,400	£730,400	£730,400	£730,400	£717,900	£6,979,000
Local Infrastructure	£2,250,000	£2,250,000	£2,250,000	£2,250,000	£2,250,000	£2,250,000	£2,250,000	£2,250,000	£2,250,000	£2,250,000	£22,500,000
Research and Innovation	£534,550	£534,550	£534,550	£534,550	£534,550	£534,550	£534,550	£534,550	£534,550	£534,550	£5,345,500
											£64,000,000
Capital											
Skills	£2,804,500	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£2,804,500
Business or Stakeholder Support	£950,000	£1,200,000	£1,000,000	£1,000,000	£1,000,000	£1,012,500	£1,012,500	£1,012,500	£1,012,500	£1,000,000	£10,200,000
Local Infrastructure	£4,500,000	£21,000,000	£11,000,000	£10,000,000	£7,600,000	£6,000,000	£350,000	£5,000,000	£0	£2,000,000	£67,450,000
Research and Innovation	£534,550	£534,550	£534,550	£534,550	£534,550	£534,550	£534,550	£534,550	£534,550	£534,550	£5,345,500
Allocations for Occupier Benefits	£510,000	£1,020,000	£1,530,000	£2,040,000	£5,100,000	Subject to Mid Term Review of uptake in Years 1-5					£10,200,000
											£96,000,000
Spend Profile											
Total	**£14,878,200**	**£30,327,422**	**£20,695,422**	**£20,223,422**	**£20,838,422**	**£14,038,422**	**£8,328,422**	**£12,948,422**	**£7,888,422**	**£9,833,422**	**£160,000,000**
Adjusted Spend Profile	**£16,000,000**	**£16,000,000**	**£16,000,000**	**£16,000,000**	**£16,000,000**	**£16,000,000**	**£16,000,000**	**£16,000,000**	**£16,000,000**	**£16,000,000**	**£160,000,000**

The figure below, extracted from the updated Logic Model for the Flintshire and Wrexham Investment Zone summarises the projected outputs and outcomes projected to be unlocked by the interventions across the different flexible spend themes.

Figure 1 - Key Outputs and Outcomes arising from the Flintshire and Wrexham Investment Zone

Outputs

Skills
20 training courses and other programmes of engagement delivered
Over 1000 learners completing a Skills Bootcamp, co-designed through engagement with up to 10 employers
300 individuals starting an apprenticeship at a new or enhanced facility
c. 1,000 individuals partaking in FE / HE learning activities including (degree) apprenticeships or newly created MSc/MRes/PhD programme
Over 30 employers claiming an incentive payment for a new apprentice
At least 2 sector-specific Skills Academies delivered, with at least 30 participants

Business or Stakeholder Support
Over 130 businesses engaged in events or business support programmes, or receiving non-financial support
Almost £10 million of financial support such as grants awarded to c. 200 businesses for manufacturing growth
Improved business concierge system providing support with topics including grant funding

Local Infrastructure
Almost 1 million sqm of new/improved commercial floorspace, with equipment for R&D and innovation activity
£500,000 worth of new capital equipment
c. 160 ha of key development sites with barriers to utilities removed or direct access created
2 transformative bus programmes delivered, including 1 in Flintshire and 1 in Wrexham
3 site-specific highways access interventions added/improved
Improved freight and logistics distribution hub
1 major site benefiting from improved active travel infrastructure

Research and Innovation
£1.2 million of data-focused R&D grant awarded to over 20 firms
£9.5 million of R&D grant for capital equipment awarded to almost 200 firms

Outcomes (Intermediate)

Improvement in **Human Capital**:
c. 3,500 individuals benefiting from interventions by either securing skilled employment, higher qualifications or with the required employer skills
Pre-16 and post-16 STEM engagement increased through interaction with over 400 participants
Over 40 employers reporting decreases in skill shortages
Over 1,000 skills intervention beneficiaries achieving positive labour market outcomes

Improvement in **Intangible Capital**:
Over £14 million of additional spending on sector specific training and business support
Over 130 businesses or other interested parties engaging in new knowledge transfer activity
Almost £20 million of funding provided for over 150 firms to partake in collaborative R&D projects
Employment of 4 new FTEs to provide increased capacity for LPAs, including upskilling and increased development activity

Improvement in **Physical Capital**:
2 local authority areas benefiting from improved access to key employment and education sites, and connectivity with housing
Investment in plants and machinery increased by almost £50 million
Up to 1500 individuals benefitting from improved access and linkages to key IZ tax sites
Projected 10% increase in active travel and public transport mode share surrounding key employment sites
Over 1 million sqm of increased floorspace unlocked because of intervention to address connectivity challenges

Improvement in **Financial Capital**:
Increased funding for R&D activity undertaken by businesses, including collaborative R&D projects
Over 200 additional businesses engaged in R&D activity
Over £20 million of increased investment in plants and machinery
Over £10.5 million of public investment crowding in new private co-investment

Outcomes (Long-Term)

Boost productivity

Increased real earnings for high and low skills workers

Increased international competitiveness of companies within the cluster

Internationally demanded new technologies

Integrated skills and innovation offer

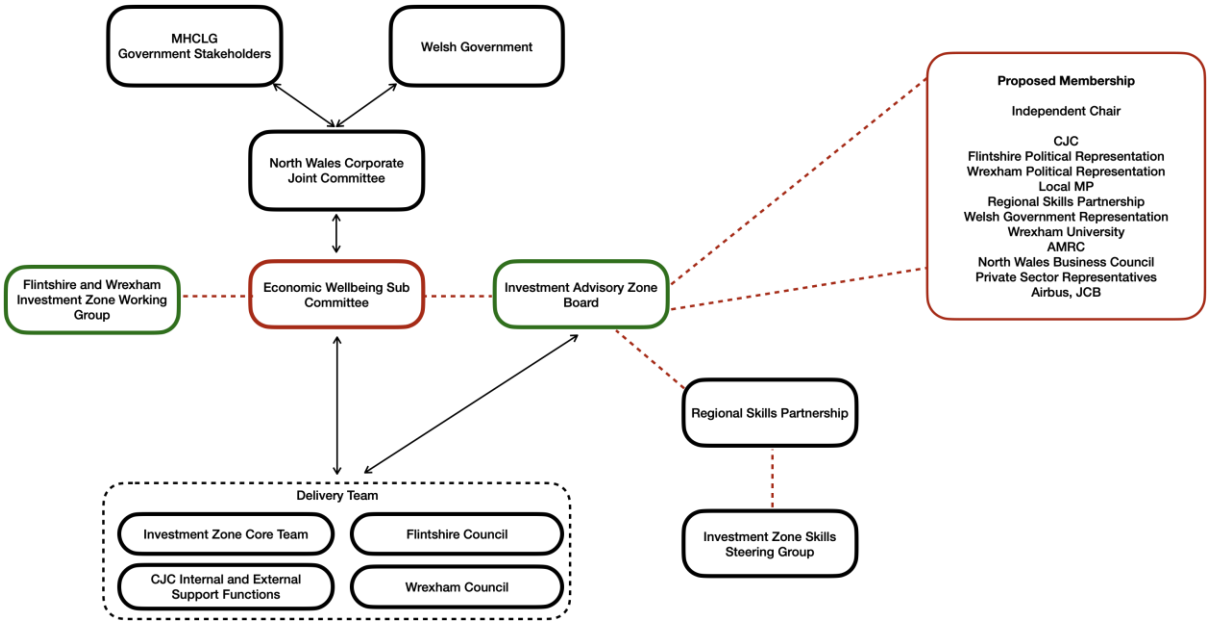
Expansion of existing supply chains

Enhanced connectivity across cluster with improved linkages between housing, employment and education assets

3.6. Establishing the Advisory Board

As set out in Gateway 3, the Governance structure for the Investment Zone is set out in Figure 2 below. The diagram illustrates the role of the Regional Skills Partnership in advising the Advisory Board (and in turn the Economic Well-being Sub-Committee) on Skills delivery. It is supported by a Sub-Group focused on implementation of the Investment Zone Skills Plan and is made up of representatives from the RSP, Coleg Cambria, University of Wrexham and the host local authorities.

Figure 2 - Investment Zone Governance Structure



3.7. Flintshire and Wrexham Investment Zone Advisory Board

The Interim Chair of the Advisory Board is Joanna Knight. The appointment will be ratified by the Economic Well-being Sub-Committee at the first meeting where the Investment Zone is part of the agenda.

The following Role Profile will be considered by the CJC (this report) and Flintshire and Wrexham Councils before being finalised.

Draft Role Profile – Chair, Flintshire and Wrexham Investment Zone Advisory Board

- Convene and Chair the Investment Zone Advisory Board, ensuring active and consistent engagement from members.
- Act as a visible champion for the Investment Zone, promoting its vision and ambitions across the private sector.
- Foster collaboration across stakeholders, building trust and alignment between business, local partners, and government.
- Maintain energy, focus, and momentum around Investment Zone interventions, ensuring private sector voice and interest is sustained.

- Communicate progress clearly and regularly to stakeholders, ensuring awareness of key developments and opportunities.
- Celebrate milestones and successes, highlighting impact and reinforcing commitment to delivery.
- Provide constructive challenge and support to delivery partners to help drive outcomes and unlock barriers.
- Represent the Investment Zone at events and forums, acting as a credible and enthusiastic advocate.
- Advise on key issues and opportunities impacting the Advanced Manufacturing Sector
- Ensure that the advice and views of the Board are communicated to decision making forums in a fair and balanced way.

The Chair role will be supported by the Investment Zone Programme Manager and Chief Executive of the CJC. The Chair may co-opt Private Sector Representatives as members of the Advisory Board.

Advisory Board Meetings are expected to be online but may be held in person once per year and consist of maximum of four 2-hour meetings per year. Minutes and actions will be recorded by a CJC officer.

Advisory Board Members

The organisations identified below will be invited to appoint representatives at a suitable seniority to the Advisory Board. Airbus and JCB have confirmed representatives. The CJC Board member should be a member of the Economic Well-being Sub-Committee drawn other than from Flintshire and Wrexham and will be appointed by the Economic Well-being Sub-Committee.

- CJC Board Member
- Flintshire Political Representation
- Wrexham Political Representation
- Local MPs
- Local MSs
- Regional Skills Partnership
- Welsh Government / UK Government Officers as observers
- Wrexham University
- AMRC
- North Wales Business Council
- Private Sector Representatives

3.8. Skills Plan Update

Having presented the emerging Skills Plan to the Regional Skills Partnership Board in May, stakeholders have now been provided with an opportunity to provide any feedback and comments on the contents of the emerging report. AMION, in close consultation with the Regional Skills Partnership, are now working through the feedback received to ensure the finalised Skills Plan adequately reflects the views of local stakeholders. Measures have also been taken to ensure that the governance and delivery recommendations integrated within

the Plan remain broadly aligned with the emerging structures across the rest of the Investment Zone programme.
Shaped by a robust and inclusive process of stakeholder engagement and data analysis, the Plan has identified a number of core intervention themes and areas to ensure that workforce development keeps pace with – and actively supports – the region's ambitions for economic transformation, with a particular focus on Advanced Manufacturing. The table below summarises these main intervention themes, which together will contribute to the establishment of a well-functioning skills system marked by the effective alignment of supply and demand.

It is envisaged that AMION will present the final Skills Plan at the Regional Skills Partnership's June Board meeting, which will then be used as a targeted framework for skills-related investment over the course of the Investment Zone programme.

Table 3 - Proposed Skills Programme Overview		
Intervention Themes	Intervention Areas	Indicative Allocation (%)
Increased engagement with pre-16 and Schools	Co-ordinated careers support and resource to increase pre-16 engagement with STEM and awareness of local career opportunities	20-25%
	Delivery of a programme targeted at improving the diversity of the manufacturing workforce and talent pipeline, including the addressing of longstanding gender imbalances	
	Integration of Investment Zone opportunities into school curriculum and developed for to support the 'work-readiness' of young people	
Support for learners aged 16 to 18	Use of incentives for employers to expand delivery of apprenticeships aligned to Investment Zone priorities to expand pathways in the key sector	35-40%
	Use of incentives to expand opportunities for young people to build work-ready skills through internships and work placements	
	Infrastructure improvements to accommodate enhanced capacity (e.g. collaborative spaces)	
	Improve transport links to enhance accessibility of education and training	
	Establishment of a mentorship and reverse mentorship scheme to drive bi-directional knowledge transfer and mutual learning	
Enhanced pathways for those aged 18+	Support for the recruitment and retention of apprentices in Advanced Manufacturing, as well as the creation of new degree apprenticeships alongside new MSc, PhD and MRes programmes	20-25%
	Co-designed education and training with employers such as skills bootcamps or sector-based work academy type models targeted at those furthest away from the labour market	
	Development of micro-credentials and short courses to grow higher-level, and technical skills	
	Expansion of Skills Portal to include Investment Zone specific careers, pathways, opportunities and events	
Upskilling and reskilling of the existing workforce	Retraining initiatives to allow for career transitions into Investment Zone sector through targeted programmes	15-20%
	Integrate entrepreneurial and innovation-focused content into provision	
	Establishment of a skills charter, and exploration of procurement mechanisms to enhance skills and careers engagement for suppliers	

3.9. Key Projects Identified

The 2024 Call for Projects identified a wide range of potential investment projects and significant demand for a business support programme backed with the ability to provide grant funding to unlock business investment. The process also identified investment opportunity to invest in the infrastructure necessary to unlock the largest development sites. The intention is to progress at pace with the consideration of two projects in particular to accelerate the immediate delivery of new tax site development land and new manufacturing operations.

A business case has been received for Project Prince from Knauf Insulation and an Outline Project Plan has been received from Pochin/Goodman for their land at Airfields, Deeside. Airbus are actively developing the case for the Advanced Manufacturing Centre adjacent to their Deeside campus.

Alongside these projects, discussions are ongoing with several local and new to region businesses seeking to attract Investment Zone support. The message to businesses seeking investment from the IZ is:

- complete an Expression of Interest Form so we can register the project; and
- the door is open, funding will be available once the Investment Zone is approved.

3.10. Delegations and Decisions

A workshop between the CJC and Flintshire and Wrexham Council's is planned for the 24th June to work through the details concerned with how decisions are made and how the programme will operate under delegations from the CJC.

The key principles proposed are:

- The CJC delegates implementation of the Accountable Body responsibility to the Economic Well-being Sub Committee.
- The CJC establishes the IZ Programme Budget, establishes the basis for the governance structure (including Terms of Reference and delegation of decisions to the Economic Well-being Sub-Committee, manages the Scheme of Delegation, enters into the MOU with Government and the two partner Councils and is responsible for staff, Pay Policy and general delegation. Appoints the Economic Well-being Sub-Committee and approves co-option arrangements.
- The Economic Well-being Sub-Committee is responsible for:
  - Manages Implementation of the Accountable Body role
  - Approves the Monitoring and Performance reports to Government
  - Approves the annual claim to Government
  - Delegation within its Terms of Reference and Constitution
  - Approve Grant Funding Agreements and Assurance Milestones
  - Risk Management
  - Approving Governance structures and reviews within its terms of reference
  - Agreeing Membership and receiving reports and advice from the IZ Advisory Board
- The Economic Well-being Sub-Committee advises the CJC on allocation of resource to support delivery

- The Economic Well-being Sub-Committee considers, manages the assurance process and take decision on all projects above £5m grant request.
- The Economic Well-being Sub-Committee considers, manages the assurance process and takes decision on all Skills projects in consultation with the Regional Skills Partnership.
- The Economic Well-being Sub-Committee considers, manages the assurance process and takes decision on all projects referred by Flintshire and Wrexham Councils.
- Flintshire and Wrexham Councils, manages the assurance process and takes decision on all projects under £5m (excluding Skills projects).
- The Flintshire and Wrexham Working Group will consider and take decision on the Annual Delivery Plan and meet in December of each year to approve the plan for the following year, which is then to be presented to EWSBC in Q1 for final approval.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1. The Financial Implications relate to the administration of £160m of Flexible Grant Funding and allocations for Tax Reliefs, in particular Business Rate Relief. The detailed financial arrangements as set out in the Grant Funding Letter, MOU with Welsh and UK Government and the Local MOU between the CJC and Flintshire and Wrexham Councils will be considered by the CJC once prepared.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1. The expectation is for the CJC to enter into an MOU with UK and Welsh Governments. The CJC will also employ or enter into a local MOU with local authority partners. In delivering the programme, the CJC will oversee the management of a project assurance process and enter into Grant Funding Agreements with university, skills, local authorities and local businesses. The intention is to develop these principles into detailed governance and constitutional arrangements which will facilitate the delivery and a management of the Investment Zone. It will also ensure that there is a robust and effective system of approvals and assurance around delivery and the use of public funding.

5.2. Subsidy Control considerations need further evaluation but are expected to be covered by a programme wide Subsidy Control Scheme.

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1: Tax Site Maps

STATUTORY OFFICERS RESPONSE:

i. Monitoring Officer:

"I have been involved in advising on the proposed model and the contents of the report. It highlights the complexity of the process in developing the Investment Zone proposal. From a governance perspective it gives the CJC an opportunity to start to

consider the detail around the structure and give initial views. This will enable the technical discussion around these matters to be developed collaboratively with the two Councils and facilitate an agreed approach. The importance of this work cannot be over emphasised as it will not only facilitate delivery but also consensus and effective communication across the partners. As with any such model it will be subject to constant review and its adoption will run in parallel with the overall approval process for the IZ."

ii. Statutory Finance Officer:

"Officers from the Finance service will be available to provide support in administering the grant, as well as advising and maintaining an overview as required in relation to the Business Rate Relief, Grant Funding Letter and the Memorandum of Understanding.

I have no objection to the decision sought."