

CYNGOR GWYNEDD CABINET



Report to Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet meeting

Date of meeting:	10 March 2026
Cabinet Member:	Councillor R. Medwyn Hughes Cabinet Member for Economy and Community
Relevant Officers:	Dylan Griffiths Manager, Economic Development Service Nia Bowden Business Support Programme Manager, Economic Development Service
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Item Title:	Adoption of a new economic development strategy for Gwynedd

1. DECISION SOUGHT

- 1.1. Approve the content of 'An Economy that Works for All: Gwynedd 2035' as set out in Appendix 1
- 1.2. Agree to recommend the adoption of 'An Economy that Works for All: Gwynedd 2035' to the full council of Cyngor Gwynedd.
- 1.3. Authorise the Head of Economy and Community to complete any minor adjustments necessary and agree the design of the Strategy in consultation with the Cabinet Member.
- 1.4. Agree to establish a 'Gwynedd Economy Forum' on the basis outlined in sections 4.19 to 4.24 of the report.

2. THE REASON FOR THE NEED FOR A DECISION

- 2.1. [Section 4 of Cyngor Gwynedd's Constitution](#) states that an economic development strategy is part of the Policy Framework and is required to be approved by the Full Council on a Cabinet recommendation.

3. INTRODUCTION

- 3.1. The Council has several plans that refer to the development of the economy:
- Within [The Council Plan 'A Prosperous Gwynedd'](#) is one of the seven priorities;
 - the [Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Plan](#) offers guidance for part of the local economy; and,
 - [Our Area: Local Regeneration Plans](#) identify local priorities for the economy.
- 3.2. It is these schemes – together with regional documents, such as the [North Wales Regional Economic Framework](#) – that have laid the foundations for the Council's work in the area of economic development in recent years.
- 3.3. Through the Council's Plan, the Cabinet recognised that not having a single plan for the county's economy is a loophole and has asked the Department of Economy and Community to draw up a new economic development strategy for Gwynedd.

4. RATIONALE AND JUSTIFICATION FOR RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

The need for an economic development strategy

- 4.1. Funding for the economic development field is increasingly uncertain and dependent on short-term programmes; for example, the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) comes to an end during the year, there is uncertainty regarding the future of ARFOR, and there is no successor to the Levelling Up Fund (LUF), which is funding the *Llewyrch o'r Llechi* programme
- 4.2. There is an increasing emphasis by the Welsh Government on regional collaboration, particularly in the context of the North Wales Ambition and the economic well-being responsibility of the Corporate Joint Committee.
- 4.3. There is significant investment by the Welsh Government and the UK Government in the Anglesey Freeport and the Flintshire and Wrexham Investment Zone, but no equivalent plans for Gwynedd.
- 4.4. By preparing and adopting a strategy, it will be possible to set out clearly the case for developing Gwynedd's economy, establish an agreed set of priorities to respond to our needs, and create a consistent framework for selecting projects and prioritising expenditure in the field
- 4.5. Once a Strategy has been adopted, we will be able to identify and develop appropriate activities and better measure the impact of our efforts.

The challenges that need attention

- 4.6. The key issues that need to be addressed include:
- Fewer working-age people working
 - Too much part-time and seasonal work
 - Fewer people of working age
 - People in poverty even though they are working
 - Low wages

- Low productivity
- Lack of diversity of industries
- Not enough new enterprises starting up
- Enterprises not growing

Steps to develop the strategy

- 4.7. The final text of a new economic development strategy for Gwynedd - 'An Economy that Works for All: Gwynedd 2035' - is included in Appendix 1 of this report.
- 4.8. The content of the Strategy stems from an extended development process in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders including the Council's key partners from the public, private and third sectors.
- 4.9. The main steps in the development of the Strategy include:
- researching the composition and relative performance of Gwynedd's economy.
 - reviewing good practice in Wales and in comparable areas across Britain.
 - seeking the views of enterprises of all types and from all parts of Gwynedd through a survey.
 - holding individual and joint discussions with stakeholders in the public, private and third sectors; and
 - obtaining input from the Council's elected members through the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
- 4.10. Based on the information gathered, a draft of the Strategy was produced. Constructive and helpful feedback on the draft was received from the Scrutiny Committee and the Council's stakeholders across the three sectors before confirming the contents.
- 4.11. Subject to Cabinet approval, the design and layout of the Strategy will be finalised before being presented to the Full Council.

The structure of the Strategy

- 4.12. The structure of the Strategy follows a logical sequence that guides the reader from the case for intervention, to the priorities, and then on to how implementation and the measurement of success are intended to be undertaken.
- 4.13. Sections 2, 3 and 4 of the Strategy set out the current position, explain why action is needed, and summarise what needs to change.
- 4.14. Section 5 outlines the basis of the Strategy, the case for joint action, and the alignment of our priorities within a local, regional and national context.
- 4.15. The Strategy's priorities are then presented (Section 6), followed by the concluding section which sets out how the Strategy will be delivered and coordinated, along with how progress will be measured.

The priorities of the Strategy

4.16. The vision for 'An Economy that Works for All: Gwynedd 2035' is:

'An innovative, productive and low-carbon economy which strengthens the Welsh language, creates new opportunities and contributes towards everyone's well-being'

4.17. It is a vision that places the people, communities and enterprises of Gwynedd at its centre, and to deliver it, three themes have been identified: **Enterprise, People and Place**.

4.18. For each of the three themes, there are two strategic priorities:

ENTERPRISE - prosperous local enterprises that excel

1. Maximise the value of our current economy:
Realising the potential of our existing enterprises and sectors by increasing their value, strengthening their resilience and supporting them to reduce emissions
2. Make the most of new opportunities:
Supporting and making the most of new industries and activities with substantial potential, ensuring that the benefit stays local

PEOPLE - a skilled and inclusive workforce

3. Securing a skilled workforce:
Nurturing, attracting and retaining talent, responding to the county's long-term skills needs
4. Supporting our people:
Supporting the people of Gwynedd to realise their full potential, to obtain quality employment, fair salaries and local opportunities

PLACE - the best conditions to thrive

5. The best possible connectivity and infrastructure:
Acting for better connectivity and business infrastructure to boost the economy
6. A great place to live, work and enterprise:
Promoting Gwynedd as a great place to live, work and enterprise, celebrating the Welsh language and our unique identity

The Strategy in Practice

4.19. A constant theme throughout the Strategy is the need for broad ownership and effort across organisations and sectors to make it a reality.

4.20. The advisory panel set up to support the realisation of the SPF in Gwynedd has highlighted the value of bringing together organisations from the public, private and third sectors.

4.21. We will therefore establish a 'Gwynedd Economy Forum' to implement the Strategy.

- 4.22. Membership of the Forum will include the key organisations that contribute to local prosperity, and the bodies working to develop an economy that benefits our communities. The Forum will bring together local partners from the public, private and third sectors. Relevant regional and national organisations will also be part of the Forum.
- 4.23. We will ensure that different parts of Gwynedd have a voice in order to maintain awareness of the diversity that exists across the county
- 4.24. The Forum will meet at least three times a year in order to:
- formulate and coordinate an annual Delivery Plan for the Strategy.
 - monitor activities and their individual and composite indicators.
 - maintain oversight of progress towards delivering the Strategy.
 - review and update the Strategy as needed.
 - maintain oversight of the wider landscape and developments relevant to Gwynedd's economy and lobby on behalf of our needs.
 - Promote and facilitate collaboration between organisations with a role in developing the county's economy and other partnerships / forums.
- 4.25. The Strategy sets out the aim and identifies a method for addressing the long-term economic challenges that have been identified for Gwynedd.
- 4.26. An annual Delivery Plan will be prepared under the leadership of the Gwynedd Economy Forum to implement the Strategy. The Plan will include activity already underway, as well as projects in development, identifying their alignment with the Strategy and the areas that will benefit. The Strategy's Monitoring and Evaluation Framework will then provide a means of measuring the success and impact of these activities.

5. NEXT STEPS AND SCHEDULE

- 5.1. With the Cabinet's seal of approval, the intention is to present the Strategy to be adopted by the Full Council in May 2026.

6. ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE DECISION

Consultations

- 6.1. The Strategy has been the subject of extensive engagement and substantial consultation throughout the period of its development, and stakeholders who have contributed their input include:
- Welsh Government
 - North Wales Ambition
 - North Wales Skills Partnership
 - Business Wales
 - Bangor University
 - Eryri National Park Authority
 - Adra housing association
 - Federation of Small Businesses Wales

- Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Tourism Partnership 2035
- National Farmers' Union (NFU) and Farmers' Union of Wales (FUW)
- Gwynedd Social Enterprise Network
- Mantell Gwynedd

6.2. Section 4 of the Impact Assessment (Appendix 2) provides a summary of the range of comments that have been received and incorporated into the Strategy.

6.3. As well as external partners, the Strategy has been discussed with a range of officers within the Council including:

- Language and Equality Unit (Corporate Services)
- Procurement Unit (Corporate Services)
- Sustainable Visiting Economy Plan (Economy and Community))
- Clean Slate Strategy (Corporate Leadership Team))

6.4. There has also been an effort to gather the views of Elected Council Members through Cabinet Members and the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee.

Impact Assessment

6.5. The Impact Assessment for the Strategy is attached as Appendix 2. It considers the impact of the Strategy on the residents of Gwynedd by:

- identifying the key features of the relationship between the Welsh language and Gwynedd's economy and demonstrating how the Strategy responds to these features to strengthen the Welsh language.
- assessing the impact of the Strategy on well-being in a holistic manner, including economic and social, environmental and cultural aspects.
- explaining how the Strategy meets the requirements and purpose of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, including the Sustainable Development Principles (i.e., the Five Ways of Working) and the Seven Well-being Goals

6.6. The preparation of the Assessment has been an iterative process with the Council's equality and language officers to inform the content of the Strategy.

6.7. In addition, a standalone assessment of the Strategy's alignment with the requirements and aspirations of the Well-being of Future Generations Act has been undertaken and is enclosed in Appendix 3. The outcome of the assessment has informed the development of Section 3 of the Strategy (the case for intervention).

Observations of the Statutory Officers

6.8. Chief Finance Officer:

"The draft Strategy presented here contains a number of activity areas, and both the report and Strategy emphasise that widespread ownership and effort across

organisations and sectors are needed to make it a reality. In this context it is noted that the Strategy does not highlight the revenue and capital costs that Cyngor Gwynedd will face in order to realise it. Whilst many of these costs will be funded from current budgets, if requests for additional budget need to be presented, I expect that this will be done through the Council's usual arrangements.”

6.9. Monitoring Officer:

“The Strategy forms part of the Council's Policy Framework which is in the hands of the Full Council for adoption and adaptation. However, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Functions and Responsibilities) (Wales) Regulations 2007 reflected in the Constitution, the matter is referred to the Council's decision on a Cabinet recommendation. I am satisfied with the propriety of the decision sought.”