



ECONOMIC WELL-BEING SUB-COMMITTEE
15 May, 2026

TITLE: Flintshire & Wrexham Investment Zone: Initial Innovation Programme Projects

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to present the three Investment Zone Innovation Projects for approval by the Economic Well-being Sub-Committee.

2. DECISION SOUGHT

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

- 2.1. Note the progress on establishing and implementing the Investment Zone Innovation programme in close partnership with Wrexham University, AMRC, Bangor University and Net Zero Industry Wales.
- 2.2. 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 support by the North Wales Innovation Board.
- 2.3. 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.
- 2.4. 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 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.
- 2.5. 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, the 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 local Industrial Decarbonisation Partnership (including NEWID and Deeside Decarbonisation Forum).

3. REASONS FOR THE DECISION

- 3.1. To seek the Economic-Wellbeing Sub-committee's approval for the first three projects within the Flintshire and Wrexham Zone Innovation Programme. These projects are 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.

4. BACKGROUND AND RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1. Decisions regarding Investment Zone investment in Innovation are aligned to the principles for Skills delivery and based on the following:

- Projects are coordinated, additional and dedicated to innovation in advanced manufacturing in Flintshire and Wrexham;
- Projects are in line with the Innovation best practice and advice from Welsh Government Innovation and UKRI;
- Projects delivered to the benefit of businesses or partners based in Flintshire and Wrexham; and
- Advice and any associated skills support is accessible to all.

- 4.2. **The North Wales Innovation Board**

The projects contained in this report have presented and received feedback from the North Wales Innovation Board. Each project presented their proposal to the Board meeting on the 30th April 2026.

Each project received feedback and where appropriate, the feedback has been factored in to the recommendations contained in this report.

5. INTRODUCTION TO THE INVESTMENT ZONE INNOVATION PROGRAMME PROJECTS

- 5.1. Details of each project are contained in Appendix 1 of this report. Each project is summarised below.

- 5.2. **Wrexham University – Knowledge Transfer and Skills Vouchers Project Summary**

The Knowledge Transfer and Skills Vouchers project provides flexible, accessible and business-focused support for companies across Wrexham and Flintshire to engage with university expertise, specialist facilities and advanced workforce development. It directly responds to the challenges identified by employers, particularly SMEs, who are under increasing pressure



to innovate, adopt new technologies and strengthen their higher-level skills base to remain competitive in an evolving advanced manufacturing landscape.

The project offers a structured suite of vouchers at different financial levels, enabling businesses to access consultancy, feasibility studies, prototyping, collaborative R&D, specialist equipment and high-level accredited and non-accredited training. This model lowers risk, removes financial and administrative barriers and creates a practical entry point for businesses who may be working with universities for the first time. By offering support that is both flexible and tailored to real operational needs, the project builds confidence and establishes the foundations for deeper, longer-term partnerships.

The project will be led by Wrexham University, with delivery by both Wrexham University and Bangor University working in partnership. Business development and engagement will be led through Wrexham University's Enterprise team and delivery supported by academic experts and technical specialists from both universities. This partnership model brings together the full breadth of research capability, specialist infrastructure and sector knowledge across both institutions. Alongside this, the project enables collaboration with other key regional assets, such as AMRC Cymru, sector-specific innovation centres, and local training providers etc, ensuring businesses benefit from the wider ecosystem and that the project leverages insight, expertise and facilities beyond the two universities where appropriate.

Activities will be delivered through multiple accessible channels to ensure maximum reach and convenience for employers. Support will take place across university campuses in Wrexham and Bangor and on employer sites where needed. The delivery timeframe has been designed to create sustained, long-term impact for the region. Initial setup and capacity development began in 2025/26, with full programme rollout from 2026/27. Delivery will continue through to 2029/30, providing a stable, multi-year platform that allows businesses to progress from exploratory innovation activity to more substantial research collaborations, commercial R&D, technology adoption and higher-level skills development.

The capability of both universities, the accessible delivery model, wider regional partnerships and the multi-year timeframe position the Knowledge Transfer and Skills Vouchers project as a transformative opportunity for strengthening innovation, productivity and workforce capability across the Investment Zone's advanced manufacturing sector.

5.3. **Bangor University - DSP Project Summary**

The BRIDGE project is strategically designed to accelerate the further development of the Advanced Manufacturing Cluster in Flintshire and Wrexham by enhancing business' connectivity, resilience, and productivity, and also fostering the creation of a sophisticated, advanced manufacturing-driven digital ecosystem to establish in the North East/North West region as a direct result of the innovation-led industrial growth.

This section details BRIDGE's objectives, workplan and delivery-related considerations. It should be noted that detailed alignment aspects, including how the project's four critical outputs support the Investment Zone's core objectives, are covered in Section B. That section



also outlines BRIDGE's alignment with the Technology and Connectivity Cross-cutting Theme and key national priorities such as the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, Wales Innovate, and the UK's ambition to become a science and technology superpower.

Objectives

BRIDGE has four objectives detailed below:

- **Objective 1: Strategic Digital Roadmaps and Technical Solutions:** Identify bespoke digital technology roadmaps for individual businesses within the Cluster, and propose both immediate and long-term technical solutions to satisfy the evolving business needs.
- **Objective 2: Industry-driven R&D and 5G Use Case Innovation:** Conduct industry-driven, international-leading R&D to develop cutting-edge digital techniques and innovative 5G use cases, which will form a vital technical platform for creating both requirement-oriented solutions for the Cluster's businesses and game-changing innovations capable of addressing bottleneck challenges associated with 5G and beyond.
- **Objective 3: Value-driven Knowledge Transfer and Commercialization:** Implement customer-centric knowledge transfer workstreams to accelerate the "research-to-revenue" transition. This includes partnering with the Cluster's manufacturing companies to develop "new-to-the-market" products based on BRIDGE-developed high-market-potential technologies, and to implement tailored 5G use cases to enhance business' operation productivity, efficiency and competitiveness.
- **Objective 4: Specialized Digital Skills and Talent Retention:** Deliver a specialized digital skills training programme through strategic collaborations with Wrexham University and Coleg Cambria. This will provide both high-level academic and vocational pathways to equip the Cluster's existing workforce and local youth with the agility to meet future Industry 4.0 challenges.

The successful delivery of these objectives will catalyse a sophisticated, advanced manufacturing-driven digital ecosystem, thus positioning the North East / North West region as a global benchmark for innovation-led industrial growth.

5.4. Net Zero Industry Wales – North East Wales Decarbonisation Project Summary

In response to the Industrial Strategy, Net Zero Industry Wales and other stakeholders in the region (Net Zero Energy Systems and AMRC) have explore options of further collaboration between these organisations and North Wales Corporate Joint Committee, to make best use of the resources & support activities listed in the Industrial Strategy Zone Action Plan and accelerate these activities in the Flintshire & Wrexham Investment Zone, to attract investment, as well as maintain public trust.



This paper background to the outlined proposal and why Net Zero Industry Wales (NZIW) is unique positioned to support the Investment Zone in its objectives, as part of delivering the wider UK Industrial Strategy in Wales, as well as providing within the proposal, a description of the activities that NZIW could support the Investment Zone with, closely linked to the Industrial Strategy Zone action plan.

This proposal positions NZIW as a convening and delivery partner for supporting the implementation elements of the Industrial Strategy Zone Action Plan within the Flintshire & Wrexham Investment Zone. By combining infrastructure acceleration, planning capacity, innovation support, and robust reporting, the outlined support program aims to:

- Unlock early private investment
- Accelerate industrial decarbonisation
- Strengthen regional competitiveness
- Deliver measurable economic and environmental benefits for North Wales

The requested funding will enable coordinated, strategic delivery aligned with UK Industrial Strategy priorities while safeguarding long-term public value and trust.

5.5. Analysis of Funding Availability

The project funding requests outlined in this paper are within the broad parameters of the agreed project budgets confirmed by Flintshire and Wrexham Councils and in line with budgets approved by the [Economic Wellbeing Sub-Committee](#) in its approval of the Year 2 Annual Delivery Plan.

Specifically:

- The Wrexham University request of £3,645,364 is afforded within the Business Support Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) allocation of £4.675m
- The Bangor University request of £1.3m (of which £120k is capital) is to be funded from the £1.018m allocation to R&D and £282k from the Business Support and Research & Innovation programmes, re-profiling the capital and revenue allocations.
- £260k request from NZIW is to be funded from the 'Studies' programme budget. Should there be future pressure on the studies budget, it would be possible to support this from the KTP allocation given the approach taken by the project to use a KTP approach to delivery.

6. ASSURANCE PROCESS & OUTCOMES

- 6.1. The contents of this report have been co-developed by the projects and the Investment Zone team. The core objective of each project has been set out in the approved Gateway documentation agreed with the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee, Welsh Government and UK Government. The approved Investment Zone MOU includes reference to an innovation programme that includes Knowledge Transfer, Data and Connectivity research and regional decarbonisation partnerships with Industry.



- 6.2. The Wrexham University project has consulted and been agreed with the North Wales Regional Skills Partnership and the North Wales Innovation Board. The Bangor University Project is named in the investment Zone Gateway documentation approved by partners and recommended for consideration by the North Wales Innovation Board. The advice of the Investment Zone team is that the funding approval to Bangor University is subject to acceptance of the Growth Deal led 'Deep Dive' into the delivery of the Growth Deal supported DSP project. The key considerations relate to the business engagement elements and governance to ensure that the businesses identified through the Investment Zone business support programme are supported with access to the DSP capability.
- 6.3. A project to support regional decarbonisation partners was set out in the Gateway documentation approved. The project lead and structure of the proposal has developed initial proposals by the NEWID and Deeside Decarbonisation partners into a joint submission. The North Wales Innovation Board recommended the project for approval.

7. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. Each project will require a Grant Funding Agreement between the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee and the project sponsor. The Grant Funding Agreement will reflect the requirements on the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee to account for investment zone funds and the appropriate reporting of delivery and outputs.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. The funds requested are in line with the broad intervention allocations and the agreed project budgets (and the agreed revenue and capital splits) will be set out in the Investment Zone Delivery Plans and reported to a future Economic Well-being Sub-Committee once the funding agreements are agreed. It is the expectation that minor budget adjustments between revenue and capital allocations will be necessary to support the funding allocations requested. There are sufficient unallocated funds to manage this.

9. **IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 9.1. Delivery of these projects will be in line with the Investment Zone approach to Impact Assessment.

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1	Wrexham University Proposal
Appendix 2	Bangor University Proposal
Appendix 3	Net Zero Industry Wales Proposal



STATUTORY OFFICERS RESPONSE:

i. **Monitoring Officer:**

“The recommendations involve approval of three Investment Zone Innovation Programme projects and authority to proceed to Grant Funding Agreements with the relevant project sponsors. The substantive decision will be one for the Sub-Committee, with implementation delegated to officers (subject to consultation) once that decision has been made.

The Grant Funding Agreements should include appropriate provisions on eligible expenditure, outputs, milestones, monitoring, etc. Any material departure from the approved proposals, funding values or delivery arrangements should be referred back for further approval.

Subject to those safeguards, then no objection to the recommendations.”

ii. **Statutory Finance Officer:**

“I do not have an objection to the decision sought and I am satisfied that the funding for the project proposals are within the budgets included in the Annual Delivery Plan. We will continue to support the officers as the Investment Zone projects move forward to delivery”.