



ECONOMIC WELL-BEING SUB-COMMITTEE

2 October, 2026

TITLE: Flintshire and Wrexham Investment Zone - Project and Allocation Approvals

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. This report updates the CJC EWSC on the delivery of the Flintshire and Wrexham Investment Zone.
- 1.2. This report seeks approval to the following projects and partnership arrangements:
 - SME Grants Programme in Flintshire, £2.5m
 - SME Grants Programme in Wrexham, £2.6m
 - Bus Transformation Programme across Flintshire and Wrexham, £17m
 - Transport for Wales Project Development Costs, £0.05m
 - Deeside Gateway Infrastructure Project, £3.5m
 - HyLine Gogledd, £0.5m
 - MASS Spectrometry Limited, £0.25m
- 1.3. The SME Grant Programmes are requested at a level to cover expenditure in Year 2 (the current financial year) and Year 3. Other allocations listed above are included in the Year 2 Annual Delivery Plan submitted to UK Government and Welsh Government. £14.3m was received in March 2026 for costs in Year 1 and Year 2. Some adjustments to Year 2 capital and revenue allocations are necessary to support these allocations but all are within tolerances and agreed in principle with Flintshire and Wrexham Councils. The Year 3 ADP review and approval process will pick up on any changes.

2. DECISION SOUGHT

- 2.1. Subject to a Subsidy Control Assessment, approve the allocation to Flintshire County Council of £2.5m (capital and revenue) for an SME Grants Programme and authorise the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair, Vice Chair, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement with Flintshire County Council.
- 2.2. Subject to a Subsidy Control Assessment, approve the allocation to Wrexham County Borough Council of £2.6m (capital and revenue) for an SME Grants Programme and authorise the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair, Vice Chair, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement with Wrexham County Borough Council.
- 2.3. Approve the proposal by Transport for Wales to invest £10m of IZ revenue funds in Flintshire and £7m IZ revenue funds in Wrexham to transform bus services to key employment and skills locations.

- 2.4. Subject to Subsidy Control Assessment, authorise the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair, Vice Chair, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement with Flintshire County Council for £10m of IZ Revenue to support the Bus Transformation Project.
- 2.5. Subject to Subsidy Control Assessment, authorise the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair, Vice Chair, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement with Wrexham County Borough Council for £7m of IZ Revenue to support the Bus Transformation Project.
- 2.6. Subject to Subsidy Control Assessment, authorise the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair, Vice Chair, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement with Transport for Wales for £50,007 of IZ Revenue to support the Bus Infrastructure Project.
- 2.7. Subject to Subsidy Control Assessment and completion of the Business Case Assurance Review by 31st, approve the allocation to Pochin Goodman Northern Gateway Limited of £3.5m (capital) in support of an infrastructure project to unlock development land within the Deeside Gateway Investment Zone Tax Site and authorise the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair, Vice Chair, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement with Pochin Goodman Northern Gateway Limited.
- 2.8. Subject to Subsidy Control Assessment, approve the allocation to Wales and West Utilities of £0.5m (revenue) in support of the pre-development work to unlock future investment in the HyLine Gogledd project and authorise the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair, Vice Chair, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement with Wales and West Utilities Limited.
- 2.9. Subject to Subsidy Control Assessment, approve the allocation to MAAS Spectrometry Limited of £0.25m (capital) in support of an R&D project, forming part of the IZ Innovation Programme, to create a new mass spectrometry machine to demonstrate the application of new technology to support manufacturing growth and export opportunity and authorise the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair, Vice Chair, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement with MAAS Spectrometry Limited.

3. REASON FOR THE DECISION

3.1. SME Grant Programme Background

The Investment Zone operates through an Inter Authority Agreement between the CJC, Flintshire County Council and Wrexham County Borough Council and an MOU with Welsh Government and UK Government. These agreements allow for the preparation and approval of Annual Delivery Plans (ADP). The Annual Delivery Plans are prepared by a IZ Working Group (the two IZ local authority Leaders), approved by the CJC and then approved by WG and UKG.

The Year 2 ADP will be determined by a review process managed by WG and UKG in October 2026 and will confirm the value of the IZ grant for Year 2 (the current financial year). The approval of the ADP is for "allocations" of funding and does not provide a "project approval". It is therefore necessary to seek CJC approval (as delegated to EWSC) to project business cases and secure the authority from the CJC to complete the assurance process and enter into funding agreements.

The IAA describes the intention for the IZ local authority partners to deliver the SME Grants Programme but it does not indicate how this programme should be managed in terms of delivery. The purpose of this report is to secure the authority to enter in Grant Funding Agreements with Flintshire and Wrexham Councils that enables them to manage the delivery of the SME programmes managed by them as accountable bodies for those programmes. It allows for each Council to claim the full value of the SME project award at the point the grant is offered to the beneficiary. The GFA therefore allows for claims based on incurred and expected expenditure.

DWF has been appointed to undertake a Subsidy Control Assessment for these allocations to Flintshire and Wrexham Councils.

3.2. Bus Transformation Background

The development of a bus transport project with the IZ Infrastructure theme has been led by Transport for Wales in close partnership with the two local authority transport teams and members and the CJC. It is considered essential that in response to the IZ investment to grow key employment sites in Flintshire and Wrexham and expand the skills provision at key sites, public access should be improved. The improvements in terms of routes, timetable (alignment with shifts) and quality of buses will drive usage and allow more people to access manufacturing skills and employment, supported by the IZ programme.

Transport for Wales appointed WSP to prepare a Business Case to justify £17m of IZ Investment in bus services across Flintshire and Wrexham. The specific routes and services have been designed and approved by each Local Authority Transport Lead Member and team. It was agreed that a single business case, prepared by TfW would be the basis for securing the IZ investment, but each local authority would be responsible for procuring the services locally. We therefore have an approval to the Business Case and two further approvals for the authority to enter two Grant Funding Agreements to allow Flintshire and Wrexham to extend the scope of existing arrangements or procure new services. In both areas, the new services will support the wider transition to a 'Franchise Network'.

The Business Case Executive Summary is available at Appendix 1. The Business Case was assured by an external consultancy, 31ten, who have provided confirmation following an extensive review (including feedback and a re-submitted document), that the project can be approved.

DWF have been appointed to undertake the Subsidy Control Assessment for this project.

3.3. Project Development Funding for Transport for Wales

The Investment Zone has allocations for "Feasibility Studies" intended to support the development of key projects to be supported by the IZ programme or by other funds.

The development of the Bus Transformation Business Case, summarised in Appendix 1 took longer than was budgeted to agree and secure. Transport for Wales are requesting £4,452 to support the additional costs associated with preparing an agreed business case.

Transport for Wales are also leading on the development of an Outline Business Case in capital investment in the bus network. To support this work, Transport for Wales is requesting £45,555.

The total revenue requested is £50,007. This will be drawn from the investment zone studies budget and the revenue component of the bus capital allocation. DWF will be asked to confirm if a Subsidy Control Assessment is required and undertake if necessary.

3.4. Deeside Gateway Infrastructure Project

Pochin Goodman Northern Gateway Limited own land within the Deeside Gateway Site which is to the rear of the site behind ITC and Leftfield Deeside. The land has the potential to support over 1,100 jobs and £2.4m of net additional GVA but requires grant support to fund up front infrastructure costs.

The project has a capital allocation with the Investment Zone Annual Delivery Plan of £3.5m, sufficient to support the requested sum of £3.5m.

A Business Case has been prepared by Aspinall Verdi and Assured by 31ten. The assurance process has confirmed an acceptable business case with a single remaining issue within the Economic Case that is being resolved by a third-party economics consultancy.

The project requires a conditional approval on this aspect of the business case. The applicant has secured an Subsidy Control Assessment from DWF LLP. The CJC will seek reliance on this Assessment or undertake its own Subsidy Assessment.

To allow the project to make swift progress on site later this year, an approval is requested at this time, conditional upon resolving the Assurance process and a Subsidy Control Assessment the CJC can rely on.

3.5. HyLine Gogledd Project

Wales and West Utilities, presented the HyLine Gogledd project to the Investment Zone, following a series of engagements supported by the NEWID decarbonisation cluster programme and our interest in exploring how net zero could be a positive driver for economic development and advanced manufacturing investment in NW Wales. The project was presented in a bespoke IZ Template for Research and Development projects and shared with the North Wales Innovation Board for discussion and input. The project was supported by the Innovation Board and there was consensus that it should be considered for approval by the EWSC.

The project would make a material contribution to the IZ net zero objectives and support NEWID, Deeside Decarbonisation Forum objectives as well as support the IZ Decarbonisation Programme led by Net Zero Industry Wales.

The project has an allocation in the agreed Annual Delivery Plan and is subject to a Subsidy Control Assessment.

3.6. MAAS Spectrometry Limited

MAAS Spectrometry Limited is a Wrexham based advanced manufacturing business creating state of the art Mass Spectrometry devices for international applications. The value of grant requested and focus on R&D exceed the scope of what the existing SME Grant Programme allowed Wrexham to allocate, so the request has been processed by Ambition North Wales, in line with the provisions in the Inter Authority Agreement.

The Project is set out in a R&D Project Application Form and was presented to the North Wales Innovation Board for review and comment. There was support from the Innovation Board for the project to be presented to EWSC for funding decision. The project is ready to start once a Grant Funding Agreement and Subsidy Control Assessment have been prepared.

4. BACKGROUND AND RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

4.1. Project Overviews

4.1.1. SME Grant Programmes

Flintshire and Wrexham have been promoting SME Grants since the start of 2026. Overall the response has been excellent. The Grant Funding Agreements will allow payments to the two Council's for awards to date and to allow future funding rounds to be resourced. Grants are currently limited to projects that support accreditation and manufacturing investment.

4.1.2. The Wrexham SME Grants Programme

The Wrexham SME Manufacturing Grants Scheme is part of the Business Support theme of the Flintshire & Wrexham Investment Zone. It will be the first element of the Investment Zone programme to be launched in Wrexham and will comprise grants to support business growth in the Advanced Manufacturing Sector, to a maximum of £100,000 per award.

The SME Manufacturing Grants Scheme has been developed through collaboration between the Business & Investment Teams and Investment Zone Programme Managers from both Wrexham County Borough Council and Flintshire County Council. Due to the nature of the economic area and the cross-border supply chain, it is important to have a similar grant programme operating in both areas.

The process has been informed by engagement with businesses throughout the development of the 5 Investment Zone Gateways, which has taken place over the last 18 months. The grants will support the key needs of SMEs within the manufacturing sector and promote growth and productivity within the advanced manufacturing businesses, whilst complying with the Investment Zone UK Government Technical guidance.

The SME Manufacturing Grants are designed to support each applying business to accelerate manufacturing growth, through capital equipment purchases, specialist support, green site modifications and Research & Development of new processes. The grants are aligned to core objectives of the Flintshire & Wrexham Investment Zone: £1bn in private sector investment and creation of 6000 high value jobs over 10 years in the advanced manufacturing sector for both regions.

The Wrexham SME Manufacturing Grants Scheme will be open to businesses located and operating within Wrexham County Borough. Applications will be assessed against criteria that support the delivery of the UK and Welsh Governments' Investment Zone policy intervention. In order to maximise flexibility, a Wrexham County Borough Council internal funding panel will make recommendations for funding awards, for approval under delegated authority. The details of successful awards will be provided to the Executive Board as period information reports.

4.1.3. Flintshire SME Grants Programme

The SME Manufacturing Grants form part of the Flexible Funding element of the Investment Zone and have been developed collaboratively by the teams of Flintshire County Council and

Wrexham County Borough Council, working alongside Programme Managers from both authorities. The scheme is shaped by robust business engagement and long-standing relationships with local manufacturers, ensuring the grants directly address the priority needs of SMEs in the sector and help drive growth across the region.

The SME Manufacturing Grants aim to accelerate the growth of eligible manufacturing businesses. Support will be available for:

1. Capital equipment for the purchase of equipment to support or enhance the manufacturing capability of an SME.
2. Accreditation and certification for the purchase of training and/or consultancy support for an SME to achieve an accreditation or certification in order to enhance access to new supply chain opportunities with larger manufacturers and enhance business turn over and growth.
3. Property adaptation and decarbonisation for the purchase of services and building modifications for an SME to transition to more sustainable operations.

These grants will be up to the value of £100,000 per application with the business expected to contribute a minimum of 30% of the total project or purchase cost. An allocation of £3m has been made from the Investment Zone programme for this grant programme with the same sum allocated for the Wrexham programme.

It is proposed that the SME Manufacturing Grants are run for a period of three years and then reviewed and evaluated based on the evidence gathered of their impact on the businesses taking part.

4.1.4. Bus Transformation and Infrastructure

The Full Business Case Executive Summary is provided in Appendix 1.

This business case requests £19.6m in revenue funding over nine years to improve bus services connecting Flintshire and Wrexham residents to major employment sites, particularly Deeside Industrial Park (DIP) and Wrexham Industrial Estate (WIE).

Of this, £16.96m would come from Investment Zone (IZ) funding, with the remaining £2.64m from Non-Domestic Rate Relief monies in Flintshire. It forms one strand of a wider £160m, 10-year IZ programme supporting advanced manufacturing, alongside skills, business support, and R&D investment.

The case argues that poor public transport access limits residents' job opportunities, narrows the labour pool available to employers, and drives car dependency with associated congestion and emissions. The proposed package covers 27 bus services and corridors, involving new routes, increased frequencies, retiming, and extended hours — representing roughly a 10% uplift in public bus funding across North Wales.

Deprivation and car-ownership data show that many of the targeted improvements serve lower-income, higher-density communities with limited access to cars — concentrated in Wrexham city (including Caia Park) and more dispersed along the Dee in Flintshire. Enhanced services are projected to expand the population within a 60-minute commute of DIP by up to 38% and WIE by up to 26%.

Demand modelling forecasts bus trips to these two sites will rise 17% by 2035 versus a "do minimum" baseline — a 12% increase at DIP and 19% at WIE — with about 90% of new trips

representing mode shift from cars rather than pure employment growth. Per-capita investment is higher in Wrexham (£99.86) than Flintshire (£79.90), reflecting Flintshire's longer, more dispersed routes and correspondingly higher costs and lower mode-shift potential.

Economic appraisal produces a benefit-cost ratio of 1.0 on core transport impacts alone, rising to 1.3 once wider non-transport impacts are included — alongside unquantified benefits such as productivity, GVA growth, and quality-of-life improvements, which together are said to represent high value for money. A separate capital business case covering bus infrastructure (priority measures, passenger facilities) is expected later in 2026.

Flintshire County Council and Wrexham County Borough Council will jointly manage delivery in partnership with Transport for Wales, letting initial contracts in 2026/27 before the services transition into the North Wales bus franchise from 2028/29. Given both councils' long track record managing supported bus contracts, the case is presented as low-risk. A single-stage business case format was agreed by ANW as a proportionate approval route.

4.1.5. Deeside Infrastructure

The Business Case Executive Summary is provided at Appendix 2.

Pochin Goodman Northern Gateway Ltd (PGNGL) is seeking £3.5 million from the Investment Zone to deliver Essential Enabling Works at Gateway Deeside, a 57-acre strategic employment site with strong utilities capacity. The works aim to make the site "oven ready," capable of delivering advanced manufacturing units within 12–18 months. This Outline Business Case builds on a March 2025 Strategic Outline Case, which requested £3.25m as part of a £6.5m total works package; the request has risen to £3.5m due to inflation, with costs supported by tendered prices.

Gateway Deeside is positioned as a nationally significant advanced manufacturing site, referenced in the Rolls-Royce SMR–MEP factory prospectus. Despite sustained market interest, development has stalled because regional commercial values can't offset the high upfront cost of bespoke manufacturing facilities. Public funding for early infrastructure — roads, drainage, utilities, earthworks — would resolve this viability gap and allow delivery of Unit 01, catalysing wider site development.

The OBC sets four objectives: addressing the shortage of Grade A manufacturing space (1.15 million sq ft of floorspace), generating high-value employment (1,100 permanent jobs plus 110 construction jobs), delivering environmental sustainability (low-carbon construction, net-zero operation), and maximising social value (Sell2Wales principles, 15% local spend, apprenticeships, real living wage). The proposal aligns with the North Wales Growth Deal, Welsh Government priorities on net zero and advanced manufacturing, UK Industrial Strategy sectors (aerospace, nuclear, semiconductors), and the Flintshire Local Development Plan.

Without intervention, the site would remain undeveloped due to what the OBC calls "persistent market failure." Enabling works are expected to unlock £43m of private investment in Phase 1 (rising to £110m+ across later phases), 1,100 long-term jobs, and £2.4m net additional GVA in Year 1.

A Green Book economic appraisal identifies enabling works for Unit 01 as the preferred option, with a Benefit Cost Ratio of 1.79 (high value for money) and Net Present Social Value of £6.64m,

alongside non-monetised benefits like cluster growth and biodiversity gain. Delivery would use the Sell2Wales framework and an NEC4 Option C contract with Early Contractor Involvement.

Financially, the £3.5m request represents 10% of total enabling costs, matched by £3.5m of private funding in Phase 1. Without grant support, developer profit sits at 2.77% — below the viability threshold — but rises to 10% with the grant, unlocking bank finance and board approval.

The project is considered low-risk and deliverable: full planning permission was secured in November 2024, delivery involves an experienced Goodman/NPL joint venture, and enabling works are programmed for completion by October 2027, backed by governance and benefit-tracking arrangements.

4.1.6. HyLine Gogledd

HyLine Gogledd is a hydrogen pipeline which connects to major energy-intensive industrial sites in Deeside and Wrexham along with additional sites along the route corridor, which collectively account for over 55% of the region's energy demand.

Nearly all of these sites are manufacturing facilities which cover a range of industries from paper manufacturing to food production. By providing a cost-effective route to site-level decarbonisation, these facilities can not only remain within Flintshire and Wrexham for the long-term but also focus their investment on developing world-leading advanced manufacturing facilities, techniques and processes.

Not only will this infrastructure ensure that industry can be retained in the region, but it will also attract new industries to currently vacant brownfield sites, providing a new proposition for regional investment into North East Wales from UK and overseas investors. This initial £0.5m of support will allow WWU to advance the project through Phase 2.1 (FEED-Ready) and give WWU the confidence to prepare for a co-investment proposition for the delivery of Phase 2.2 (FEED), currently estimated at a further £13m, depending on the further development of market enabling policy (notably Hydrogen Transport Business Models) by UK government.

In addition to this, it is likely that advanced manufacturing sites anchored by Deeside and Wrexham Industrial Estate, which employ approximately 19,000 people, will be able to unlock additional co-investment through a connection to HyLine Gogledd (e.g. through fuel-switching trials).

As a core delivery partner of the North East Wales Industrial Decarbonisation (NEWID) Cluster, WWU has demonstrated that the delivery of a regional hydrogen transport network such as HyLine Gogledd will:

- Save up to 27m tonnes of cumulative CO2 emissions by 2058
- Support the creation of up to 6,000 local jobs
- Generate £17b of economic value
- Unlock social value of up to £3.3b

4.1.7. MAAS Spectrometry Limited

MAAS Spectrometry Limited is a Wrexham Business situated in the Wrexham Technology Park. For 4 years they were a pure Deep Tech R&D Company. Last June they located in Wrexham and commenced operations with employees. MAAS Spectrometry Limited create disruptive and, in some instances, unique scientific instrumentation (In-organic Mass Spectrometers),

only two other companies have the ability to produce this technology, both are American. One of them, Alan McCall founded and sold to Ametek. The MAAS Spectrometry Limited mission is to make and develop this technology as a Welsh Company. Having a number of decades in this technology both Alan McCall and Andrew Burrows have produced an instrument with all the lessons learned and experience gained over decades. They now want to take this technology into another area of instrumentation not undertaken by the competition. This would result in a unique technology only made in Wales. In addition, we have formed links with institutions such as Wrexham University and many suppliers who we intend to work with to get as much of the technology manufactured in Wales, in turn limiting supply chain risks.

The project aims to integrate a “Microwave Inductively Coupled Atmospheric Plasma” (MICAP) ion source onto a MAAS Multi-Collector Mass Spectrometer. Traditionally these mass spectrometers have an “Inductively Coupled Plasma” (ICP) ion source which uses Argon gas and a high power RF Generator to produce a “flame” of around 6000-8000 degrees C which ionizes the sample. The MICAP ion source uses Nitrogen gas and a high power microwave generator to produce a flame of the same temperature. The first advantage of this ion source is running costs, the cost of pure Argon is roughly three times the cost of pure Nitrogen, this alone would save users ~£50-£100K per annum in running costs. The second and more exciting advantage is the potential to analyse elements that traditionally suffer from Argon based interferences in the mass spectrometer. Elements such as Calcium or Selenium for example which are currently analysed on very expensive, very complicated collision cell systems, could be analysed easily, interference free, on a MICAP source mass spectrometer. Other key areas of design are a Laminated Electro Magnet and a framework/bench that provides RF shielding and fiberglass covers.

The project will be delivered by Alan McCall CEO. It is anticipated the project will run for 12-15 Months, with a further three months in reserve should it become necessary. This project seeks to create a new generation instrument which technologically does not exist anywhere else in the world. It is at the heart of ‘Deep Tech’ and so by definition is at the pinnacle of innovation, with a very strong emphasis on Advanced Manufacturing in areas such as Ion Optics, Precision Machining, Vacuum Technology and Surface Mount Technology. This project will produce ‘Technical Knowledge and understanding and provide Highly Skilled jobs, including a MC ICPMs Development Scientist and a Development/Test and Installation Engineer. It is also hoped that we can start training and developing our own Technicians to manufacture future instruments.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. The projects set out in this paper are contained in the agreed Annual Delivery Plan. All are capable of securing allocated resource within the programme. Once detailed cashflows for spend are agreed with each project, the in year capital and revenue allocations can be updated with updates to the ADP for Year 3.
- 5.2. The SME Grant programmes are expected to deliver close to the allocations in Year 2 and the funding set out in this paper will cover expected costs in Year 3. The bus transformation project is expected to claim funds from Year 3 onwards, but if delivery can be secured in Year 2, then allocations can be updated in ADP 3. The Deeside Gateway project has an allocation in Year 2, but part of this may slip into Year 3. The timing of MAAS Spectrometry and HyLine Gogledd will be confirmed in the Grant Funding Agreements, they are allocated funds in Year 3 of the ADP.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The recommendations constitute approval of the specified Investment Zone project funding allocations and, where applicable, delegate authority to the Chief Executive to enter into the associated Grant Funding Agreements following the stated consultations. Completion of those agreements will create binding funding obligations and should only take place once the relevant subsidy control and business case assurance conditions identified in the recommendations have been satisfactorily completed. The proposed decisions are stated to be within the approved Investment Zone Annual Delivery Plan, MOU and Inter Authority Agreement framework.

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1	Bus Transformation Business Case Executive Summary
Appendix 2	Deeside Gateway Business Case Executive Summary
Appendix 3	HyLine Gogledd Application Form
Appendix 4	MAAS Spectrometry Application Form

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS *(available on request due to confidentiality)*

1. Flintshire Council Report re: SME Grants
2. Wrexham Council Report re: SME Grants
3. Bus Transformation Full Business Case
4. Deeside Gateway Full Business Case

STATUTORY OFFICERS RESPONSE:

i. **Monitoring Officer:**

“Subject to satisfactory completion of the subsidy control and assurance requirements identified in the recommendations, and completion of the Grant Funding Agreements through the proposed delegated approval process, I have no objection to the decisions sought.”

ii. **Statutory Finance Officer:**

“I have no objection to the decisions sought and the allocations quoted for the individual projects are within the Investment Zone funding amounts that were included in the Annual Delivery Plan that was presented to this sub-committee in July.”

