Uchelgais Gogledd Cymru
Ambition North Wales

Annual Report 2023/24

ambitionnorth.wales

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OUR AMBITION

To be confident and cohesive, focused on improving the region's economic, social and environmental well-being.

To see the region develop in a sustainable way, with opportunities for people to gain new skills, develop rewarding careers, for businesses to grow and communities to prosper.

To do this while championing the Welsh language, our culture and heritage, in line with the well-being goals for Wales.

Foreword

We are delighted to present the 2023-24 Annual Report, highlighting the progress made in delivering the North Wales Growth Deal in its third year. This 15-year agreement between Ambition North Wales, the UK Government, and the Welsh Government aims to create new high-value jobs and attract private sector investment, enhancing the economic, social, and environmental well-being of North Wales.

This summer, the long-awaited Harbour Revision Order, essential for the Holyhead port expansion project, received Welsh Ministerial approval. This milestone allows the Holyhead Gateway project, led by Stena Line, to proceed with reclaiming 11.7 hectares of land from the sea. The project which is subject to business case approval will secure capacity to create hundreds of new jobs and deliver a significant investment in the region.

Additionally, the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund allocated £126.5 million across our six councils. This allocation, based on a regional investment plan, focuses on building pride in place and increasing life chances. Collectively we have directed £1million of this funding to further enhance the impact and efficacy of the Growth Deal. Our shared regional priorities in Skills and Employability, Energy and Net Zero, Benefits and Social Value, and Digital Connectivity will deliver innovative projects designed to embed and enrich our current regional economic development plans.

Improving digital connectivity and ensuring that everyone has access to a fast and reliable digital connection is an absolute necessity in today's world. This year, through the Welsh Government's Local Broadband Fund we led a project to provide gigabit-capable fibreoptic broadband at seventeen public buildings including GP surgeries, libraries and village halls across North Wales.

Our commitment to sustainable development is exemplified through the emergence of Local Area Energy Plans - ensuring that all six of our councils set out a compelling vision for a net-zero carbon energy system by 2050 and an action plan to achieve this.

The Regional Skills Partnership is unquestionably respected in their leadership of the skills and employability agenda for North Wales and we hope to see this relationship continue to grow and gain more Welsh Government support.

Most of these examples go beyond the Growth Deal, they reflect the wider vision and ambition we hold for North Wales.

It has been our privilege to lead what has been a busy and productive year for Ambition North Wales.

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Cllr. Dyfrig Siencyn
Chair of the Economic Ambition Board

Cllr. Mark Pritchard
Vice-Chair of the Economic Ambition Board

PROGRESSING GROWTH IN OUR REGION

It's three years since we signed the North Wales Growth deal agreement and this year we have seen another five of our projects achieve approval of their outline business cases - the Tourism Talent Network, Egni, Deeside Anaerobic Digestion Plant, 4G+ and the Former North Wales Hospital in Denbigh. This means that ten projects have now reached this stage over the last three years. Given the significance of global events during this time, I'm unashamed in my recognition of what the Ambition North Wales partnership has achieved.

The Enterprise Engineering and Optics Centre also moved into delivery after securing approval of its full business case to secure the Growth Deal funding. This is a significant milestone because it sees the first of our capital projects being built. Very soon after the turf cutting ceremony on the 22 February, Wynne Construction were on-site and at work at the Plas Coch site.

The early part of last year saw us go out to market to seek new and innovative projects to join the Growth Deal. After a rigorous process, in July we were delighted to announce that five new projects had been invited to submit their outline business cases, all seeking a slice of the £30m of available capital. Kinmel Studios, Responsible Adventure, Wrexham Gateway, and the Holyhead Hydrogen Hub are working on their outline business cases, with approval already gained for the Deeside Anaerobic Digestion Plant.

This just goes to show, that in contrast to last year - which saw two of our projects withdraw from the Growth Deal and another significantly change its scope, this year has been a year of strengthening our portfolio of projects. All signalling a positive year ahead as we plan to take these new projects through into delivery. Ultimately, our ambition through these transformational initiatives remains unchanged - they will bring new high-value jobs and investment as well as deliver on our wider aspiration to build a vibrant, sustainable, and resilient economy for North Wales.

The outlook is positive with the end of this year marked with an encouraging outcome to our Hydrogen Sponsor Challenge, with a sponsor appointment to lead the delivery of a Hydrogen Hub. A Memorandum of Understanding is currently being developed, prior to an official announcement on the project sponsor being made. The project will aim to help fossil fuel powered organisations become low carbon hydrogen customers and deliver an operational hydrogen production facility.

I am proud of my team, the partnership, and the momentum we are building for excellence in our ways of working. Last year we achieved recognition as a Leadership Case Study in the UK national carbon in infrastructure guidelines. Together, we are also aware of our social responsibility as a team, and have been raising funds over the year for our charity of the year children's hospice, Ty Gobaith.

With our passion for North Wales - its economy, businesses, communities and people, we are committed to seeing our region thrive in the future. I'm looking forward to being part of the journey over the next twelve months.

Alwen Williams
Portfolio Director

> North Wales is making its mark - uniquely positioned to build on its strengths and rise to global challenges

Askar Sheibani

Chair of the Business Delivery Board

Global warming, international economic instability, and ongoing regional conflicts have prompted radical governmental policy changes worldwide. Many nations are struggling to adapt to the rapidly changing economic landscape. This has led to an acceleration in national defence and security spending, resulting in significant growth in the high-tech aerospace and engineering sectors.

According to the International Monetary Fund, achieving the Net Zero target requires an investment of up to $6 trillion every year. In response to these global challenges, North Wales is uniquely positioned to play a pivotal role. The region has already begun laying the groundwork for substantial growth in renewable energy and decarbonisation projects.

One such project is the Tidal Stream project in Anglesey, aiming to eventually produce 240MW of low-carbon clean energy. North Wales is also home to the UK's largest solar farms, with further low-carbon energy projects planned across the region, including infrastructure for hydrogen energy.

Moreover, North Wales boasts a strong presence in the world's aerospace manufacturing and innovation sector. The region has aligned itself with the urgent global economic trajectory, making it one of the most sought-after regions for investment.

Supported by a team of highly experienced business leaders within the Business Delivery Board, Ambition North Wales is driving forward these initiatives. Their outstanding track record on an international level ensure North Wales remains at the forefront of economic development and innovation.

2023 - 24 MILESTONES

April 2023 - March 2024

April

We achieved recognition as a Leadership Case Study in the UK national carbon in infrastructure guidelines.

May

We presented on our progress, the RSP and opportunities for cross-border collaboration to the North Wales Cabinet Sub-Committee.

June

We launched the Hydrogen Sponsor challenge.

July

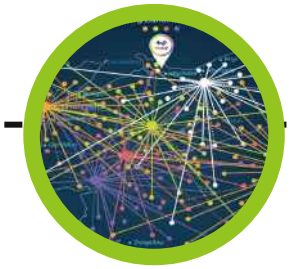
We welcomed 5 new projects to join the growth deal.

August

We hosted a stand at the National Eisteddfod in Boduan.

September

A Regional Skills Partnership collaboration launched a Low Carbon Energy Prospectus and Video.



October

The Tourism Talent Network Outline Business Case was approved by the Economic Ambition Board.

November

The Enterprise Engineering and Optics Centre Full Business Case was approved by the Economic Ambition Board.

December

The Deeside Anaerobic Digestion Plant and Egni Outline Business Cases were approved by the Economic Ambition Board.

January

The Regional Skills Partnership's Young Person's Toolkit launched to help young people follow the pathway that best suits them.

February

The Former North Wales Hospital Outline Business Case was approved by the Economic Ambition Board.

March

A series of workshops were held to review the key outputs of the Local Area Energy Plans.

Quarter 1 Highlights
April to June 2023

LEADERSHIP CASE STUDY

We achieved recognition as a Leadership Case Study in the UK national carbon in infrastructure guidelines PAS 2080 which was hailed as a "game-changer" by the World Economic Forum. The guidelines provide a standard for managing carbon in buildings and infrastructure, reducing carbon and cost through intelligent design, construction, and use.

SPARCX

We sponsored SparcX alongside the Regional Skills Partnership. The event, hosted by M-Sparc, was an opportunity for employers and job seekers in the Science and Tech sector to meet to discuss recruitment opportunities. The event was a great success, with many job seekers securing job interviews.

CONTRACTS SIGNED FOR SECOND PHASE OF DSP

Contracts were signed for the second phase of the Digital Signal Processing Centre's Growth Deal funded equipment. The procurement also secured £101,415 additional social value from the suppliers, including annual technology seminars, potential internships, free equipment, and technical support.

WE ATTENDED THE WALES START UP AWARDS

We were sponsors for the North Wales category, with Plantsea Ltd taking the award. Plantsea Ltd aim to replace environmentally damaging petroleum-based plastics with biodegradable alternatives using natural resources found on the seashore.

HYDROGEN SPONSOR CHALLENGE PRE-LAUNCH EVENT

The Hydrogen Sponsor Challenge pre-launch event was held on the 18th April in Llandudno Junction - then Minister for Economy Vaughan Gething and then Under-Secretary of State for Wales James Davies MP delivered keynote speeches at the event. It was attended by over forty organisations from across the hydrogen value chain, government, and Ambition North Wales partners. The day was a success, with positive feedback and significant networking between organisations.

TWO YEARS INTO DELIVERY

The Digital Signal Processing (DSP) Centre

In early 2023, Bangor University's DSP Centre project entered its second year of delivery. Since its launch, the project has progressed to achieving academic and professional recognition in publications such as the Institute of Engineering Technology and more. To date the DSP Centre achieved the following:

- created 13 gross direct jobs
- generated an additional £1.275m GVA
- secured £1.5 million additional funding
- 53 people attending skills training
- 18 partners in a collaboration

Professor Paul Spencer, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Research:

"As the first project to receive Growth Deal funding, the DSP Centre exemplifies how external investment can substantially drive economic development and foster the future growth and prosperity of North Wales."

Quarter 2 Highlights
July to September 2023

ABERINNOVATION

A delegation from the Innovation in High Value Manufacturing Programme Board visited AberInnovation in early July. The visit was a great networking opportunity and covered AberInnovation and IBERS work on agri-food, phenomics and climate adaptation work, as well as research from the Aberystwyth University cross-disciplinary Rural Futures Hub.

MINISTERIAL APPROVAL FOR THE HARBOUR REVISION ORDER

The Holyhead Gateway Port Expansion Project received Welsh Government Ministerial approval for the Harbour Revision Order in August. This removed one of the projects major uncertainties in relation to the project's delivery.

LAUNCH - LOW CARBON ENERGY PROSPECTUS AND VIDEO

In collaboration with providers in the region, our Regional Skills Partnership developed resources to highlight the excellent educational and training facilities available in North Wales to support the low carbon energy industry.

NATIONAL EISTEDDFOD

We hosted a stand at the National Eisteddfod in Boduan. Those who visited the stand saw a demonstration of tidal energy through a turbine model, children enjoyed a treasure hunt, a postcard activity and a selfie frame. Portfolio Director, Alwen Williams participated in a panel discussion on Unlocking the North Wales Economy, hosted by Nia Thomas, BBC Broadcaster.

New projects join the Growth Deal

In July, we announced that the North Wales Economic Ambition Board had supported a recommendation to invite five new projects to join the Growth Deal portfolio. They were each awarded a provisional allocation of Growth Deal capital funding subject to agreeing a Memorandum of Understanding - setting out expectations of them in relation to securing the funding, and approval of their business cases.

All are transformational projects, which have the potential to bring significant addition to North Wales communities and the economy by generating additional investment and employment opportunities in key sectors. They reflect our vision for innovative and sustainable economic prosperity through collaboration between public and private sectors.

Responsible Adventure Zip World	£6.2m
Wrexham Gateway Wrexham County Borough Council	£4.79m
Holyhead Hydrogen Hub Menter Môn	£3.8m
Kinmel Studios Stage Fifty	£6.8m
Deeside Anaerobic Digestion Plant The Circular Economy Developments Ltd	£6.4m

Quarter 3 Highlights
October to December 2023

LOW CARBON ENERGY

The Deeside Anaerobic Digestion Plant and Egni Outline Business Cases were approved by the Economic Ambition Board.

The Deeside project will promote a local circular economy using waste materials from local industry as feedstock contributing to a greener future for North Wales.

The Egni project will see the build of a second building on the M-Sparc site, developing a Centre of Excellence, enhancing research, design and innovation in low carbon energy.

EEOC FULL BUSINESS CASE APPROVED

The Economic Ambition Board gave its approval to the full business case for Wrexham University's Enterprise Engineering and Optics Centre (EEOC). The Growth Deal will fund £11.55m of the total project value.

The project will deliver a specialist centre for research and development, business collaboration and skills development in optics, photonics and composites as lightweight alternatives for manufacturing.

PROGRESS FOR PARC BRYN CEGIN

The Design and Consultancy Teams for Parc Bryn Cegin, Bangor have been appointed by Welsh Government. This is the first step towards obtaining a project scheme which will be submitted for planning and other consents.

TOURISM TALENT NETWORK

We announced that the Tourism Talent Network had moved to its final Growth Deal funding stage, having had its outline business case approved by the Economic Ambition Board.

The project, led by Grŵp Llandrillo Menai, will see the first specialist tourism skills hub set up in Wales. It will aim to transform the approach to developing skills for the tourism and hospitality industry in the north.

FIRST CONSTRUCTION PROJECT UNDERWAY Enterprise Engineering and Optics Centre

In early 2024, the Enterprise Engineering and Optics Centre was the Growth Deal's first construction project to move into delivery.

The Enterprise Engineering and Optics Centre is a pioneering build. It will deliver a specialist centre for research and development, business collaboration and skills development in optics, photonics and composites as lightweight alternatives for manufacturing. The result will be to offer regional manufacturing businesses support in reducing the environmental impact of their products and processes.

In addition, the development will integrate hydrogen as a substitute fuel source contributing to sustainable practices in industry.

A key part of the project is to attract investment to North Wales and create local employment, with between 70 and 90 new jobs projected and more than 1,000 people trained to deliver innovative solutions for the future.

The project also includes improvements for facilities at a second university site – the OpTIC Technology Centre at St Asaph.

Professor Maria Hinfelaar, Vice-Chancellor, Wrexham University: "This investment has enabled a transformational build which - once operational - will support regional businesses to develop cutting-edge solutions to their manufacturing challenges, reducing carbon emissions and bringing potential cost and efficiency benefits."

Quarter 4 Highlights
January to March 2024

INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The Economic Ambition Board endorsed an Investment Strategy for North Wales. The aim of the strategy is to attract Growth Deal and wider regional economic development into the region.

FORMER NORTH WALES HOSPITAL OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE APPROVED

The Former North Wales Hospital Outline Business Case was approved by the Economic Ambition Board. The site looks set to become a central part of the community once again, providing employment and homes for local people.

HYDROGEN HUB GAINS SPONSOR

A sponsor was selected by the Economic Ambition Board for the Hydrogen Sponsor Challenge.

The project intends to implement full chain hydrogen production, transport and end use.

The next step in the process will see the sponsor agree a Memorandum of Understanding with Ambition North Wales before developing an outline business case over the coming year.

REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS IN NORTH WALES

Funding was secured from the Welsh Government towards a piece of research and analysis to strengthen local and regional food systems in North Wales. A series of workshops have taken place to identify possible future regional agri-food projects.

EEOC COMMENCES CONSTRUCTION

Together with Wrexham University we signed the funding agreement for the Enterprise Engineering and Optics Centre project.

This followed with an official Turf Cutting on the site - marking the start of the North Wales Growth Deal's first construction project. Fay Jones MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales and Rebecca Evans MS, Minister for Finance and Local Government were joined on site at Wrexham University's Plas Coch Campus in Wrexham by representatives from the University, Ambition North Wales and Wynne Construction.

LOCAL BROADBAND FUND

The Local Broadband fund project concluded at the end of March. The project, led by Ambition North Wales, was funded through the Welsh Government's Local Broadband Fund. The project has upgraded broadband connections to 17 public sector managed sites, this involved the installation of gigabit-capable fibreoptic broadband at local authority and health sites in Wrexham, Gwynedd, Flintshire, Denbighshire and Conwy. These sites include libraries and village halls. The work has resulted in wider network improvements in the target areas.

upgraded broadband connections to

17

public sector managed sites

THE NORTH WALES GROWTH DEAL

funded by:

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

UK Government
Llywodraeth y DU

OVERVIEW OF THE GROWTH DEAL

- To build a more vibrant, sustainable and resilient economy in North Wales.
- To build on our strengths, to boost productivity while tackling long-term challenges and economic barriers to deliver inclusive growth.
- To promote growth in a scalable, inclusive and sustainable way, in line with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

INVESTMENT

£240M
Growth Deal target investment

Total Target Investment:
over **£1bn**

SPENDING OBJECTIVES

Create up to
4,200
new jobs

Generate up to
£2.4bn
net additional GVA

OUR PROGRAMMES

Innovation in High Value Manufacturing

Agri-food and Tourism

Digital Connectivity

Land and Property

Low Carbon Energy

Agri-food and Tourism

The programme aims to promote and support employment and training in the Agri-food and Tourism sectors, building on world-leading skills and expertise already established within the region.

Glynllifon Rural Economy Hub

Lead Sponsor: Grŵp Llandrillo Menai

A distinctive, world class rural economy hub offering food-grade facilities and knowledge transfer services to enhance the food and drink sector.

Preparing the Full Business Case

Tourism Talent Network

Lead Sponsor: Grŵp Llandrillo Menai

Future-proof tourism and hospitality skills provision and increase the commercial benefits from one of the best established and fastest growing sectors in the region.

Preparing the Full Business Case

Responsible Adventure

Lead Sponsor: Zip World

This project will promote North Wales as a leading sustainable tourism destination. It aims to attract additional visitors in a way which is environmentally sustainable and considerate to local communities. It consists of developing a new sustainable cable car, slate explorer and eBus network.

Preparing the Outline Business Case

Digital Connectivity

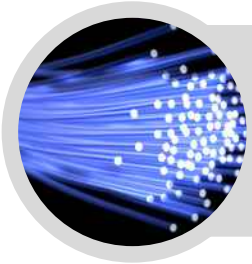
Addressing connectivity challenges within the region, enhancing the capability to develop new technologies for the future ensuring that businesses and residents can benefit from fast, high-quality connectivity.

Connected Campuses

Lead Sponsor: Ambition North Wales

Establishing network coverage at key commercial sites in the region, supporting businesses with valuable connectivity options.

Preparing the Outline Business Case



Connected Key Sites and Corridors

Lead Sponsor: Ambition North Wales

Enhancing the reliability and quality of mobile services on the main roads and rail routes, enabling full-fibre services to key commercial sites across the region.

Preparing the Full Business Case

The Digital Signal Processing Centre

Lead Sponsor: Bangor University

Research and development of new technologies which improve how data is processed efficiently and reliably between devices and people.

Project Implementation and Monitoring

The Last Few %

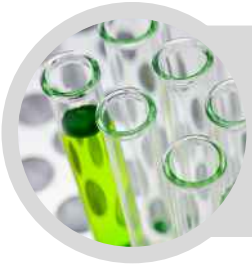
Lead Sponsor: Ambition North Wales

Providing a minimum 'superfast' (30Mbps) broadband to poorly connected communities across North Wales.

Preparing the Full Business Case

Innovation in High Value Manufacturing

Promote innovation and commercialisation of technology in the manufacturing industry, building on the existing strength of the sector within our region.



Centre for Environmental Biotechnology

Lead Sponsor: Bangor University

Exploring the use of biological processes as low carbon alternatives to products and industrial manufacturing processes.

Preparing the Business Justification Case

Enterprise Engineering and Optics Centre

Lead Sponsor: Wrexham University

Delivering state-of-the-art facilities to explore optics, photonics and composite materials as a lightweight material alternative, reducing carbon within the sector.

Project Implementation and Monitoring

Land and Property

Addressing land and property challenges within the region, to unlock opportunities and build on our strengths. The programme will develop sites to provide residential and employment premises. It will also maximise capacity at key transport links.

Former North Wales Hospital

Lead Sponsor: Jones Bros Civil Engineering UK

Remove dangerous buildings and prepare the site for new homes and new commercial units for new and existing businesses to relocate and expand.

Preparing the Full Business Case

Holyhead Gateway

Lead Sponsor: Stenaline

Improve the port's capacity and facilities, creating a multi purpose berth for new energy projects, commercial traffic and cruise ships.

Preparing the Outline Business Case

Parc Bryn Cegin

Lead Sponsor: Ambition North Wales

Develop new build employment premises suitable for new and existing buisinesses to expand and relocate.

Preparing the Outline Business Case

Warren Hall, Broughton

Lead Sponsor: Ambition North Wales and Welsh Government

The provision of primary services to deliver development plots for new and existing businesses to expand or relocate.

Preparing the Strategic Case

Western Gateway, Wrexham

Lead Sponsor: Ambition North Wales

The provision of primary services to deliver development plots for new and existing businesses to expand or relocate.

Preparing the Strategic Case

Kinmel Studios

Lead Sponsor: Stage Fifty

This project will design, build and operate a new film and television studio at Tir Llwyd Enterprise Park, Kinmel Bay.

Preparing the Strategic Case

Wrexham Gateway

Lead Sponsor: Wrexham County Borough Council

Part of the Wrexham Gateway masterplan, this project aims to deliver a transformative mixed-use regeneration scheme of the area around Wrexham General Station.

Preparing the Strategic Case

Low Carbon Energy

Unlocking the benefits of developing low carbon energy projects within the region, positioning North Wales as a leading location for the low carbon energy sector.

Cydnerth (Morlais)
Lead Sponsor: Menter Môn
Develop additional grid connections for tidal energy suppliers to deploy more turbines within the zone.

Preparing the Outline Business Case

Egni
Lead Sponsor: Bangor University
Developing a Centre of Excellence, enhancing research, design and innovation in low carbon energy.

Preparing the Full Business Case

Hydrogen Hub
Lead Sponsor: Ambition North Wales
Kick-start the region's hydrogen economy by supporting and delivering a hydrogen hub.

Preparing the Strategic Outline Case

Smart Local Energy
Lead Sponsor: Ambition North Wales
Support projects to achieve renewable energy, decarbonisation and have local ownership.

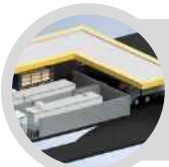
Preparing the Full Business Case

Trawsfynydd
Lead Sponsor: Cwmni Egino (Welsh Government)
Deploy Small or Advanced Modular Reactors at the site to generate low carbon energy.

Preparing the Strategic Outline Case

Deeside Anaerobic Digestion Plant
Lead Sponsor: The Circular Economy Developments Ltd
This project will promote a local circular economy using waste materials from local industry as feedstock contributing to a greener future for North Wales.

Preparing the Full Business Case



Holyhead Hydrogen Hub
Lead Sponsor: Menter Môn
This project will establish a green hydrogen production and distribution facility, at Parc Cybi, Holyhead within the Anglesey Freeport zone.

Preparing the Outline Business Case

GOVERNANCE OVERVIEW

Local authority partners established the Economic Ambition Board as a joint committee in 2019, and is the decision-making body for the North Wales Growth Deal, as well as leading regional economic collaboration.

Having secured the Growth Deal in December 2020, the partners entered 'Governance Agreement 2'. This agreement, a legally binding document, defines the role and function of the Economic Ambition Board and its use of delegated powers. It also outlines the decision-making structures and democratic accountability.

The Growth Deal's governance arrangements enable decisions to be made openly and transparently for the benefit of the whole of the region. While the Economic Ambition Board acts as the decision-making body for the Growth Deal, there are strong formal and informal links to the Welsh and UK Governments as funders of the Deal.

The Economic Ambition Board has adopted a delivery model based on a best-practice approach to portfolio, programme and project management. This approach is an integrated way of meeting an organisation's ambition, driving better decisions and increasing the likelihood of successful outcomes.

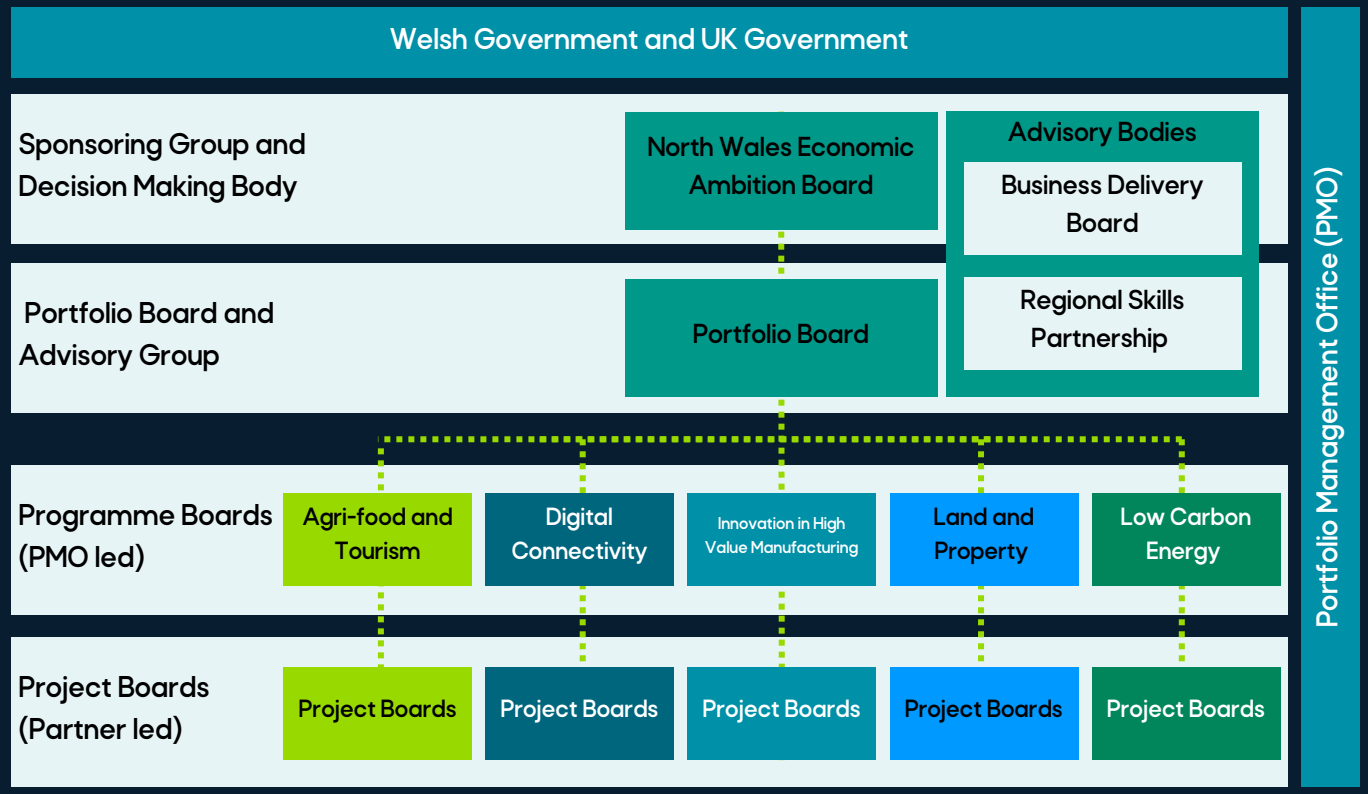
REPORTING

The Portfolio Management Office produce quarterly progress reports and an annual report on the Growth Deal which are shared with the Welsh Government and UK Government, the Economic Ambition Board and its partners. These reports are publicly available on our website.

SCRUITNY ARRANGEMENTS

Scrutiny of the North Wales Growth Deal is provided by the six local authorities through the existing Scrutiny Committee arrangements. The Scrutiny Committees consider the quarterly and annual reports produced by the Portfolio Management Office.

GROWTH DEAL PROJECT DELIVERY STRUCTURE



BEYOND THE GROWTH DEAL

SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY

OVERVIEW BY THE NORTH WALES REGIONAL SKILLS PARTNERSHIP (RSP):

It has been a busy year for the North Wales Regional Skills Partnership. Now 12 months into delivery of its 2023-25 Skills and Employment plan, the team have achieved so much in supporting employers and individuals - and facilitated connections between them. From commissioning research work, to developing resources for young people and employers, it has been a productive year - with a number of exciting projects in the pipeline.

HIGHLIGHTS OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS:

Recruiting ex-offenders

Finding work after leaving prison can be difficult for individuals due to the myths of recruiting ex-offenders. To dispel some of these myths, the RSP, Ministry of Justice, Working Wales, Welsh Government and DWP worked together to offer employer visits to HMP Berwyn.

The aim was to show employers how individuals develop their competences while in the prison, gaining practical and transferable skills for the workplace.

Career Pathways Pilot

In collaboration with Anglesey Council's Education Department, Teachers, Coleg Menai, GWE, Careers Wales, and Llwyddo'n Lleol the RSP have established a Career Pathways Pilot on Anglesey. The aim is to inspire young minds about local training and career opportunities and the different pathways to their future - through pilot projects across all five secondary schools on the island.

One project for the group is the Teacher Encounter Pilot, which equips teachers with insights into regional job opportunities, allowing them to integrate this knowledge into their classroom teaching and make the connections between the curriculum and working skills.

Another initiative being developed is the 'Inspire to Build' project, led by the Construction Employer Sub-group. This will be a short-term programme, shining a spotlight on higher-level construction roles such as architecture, planning and quantity surveying.

Seren Conference Seminar: 'North Wales: Your Pathways to the Future'

The team held a seminar - 'North Wales: Your Pathways to the Future' at a Seren Conference in November to highlight graduate employment and training opportunities. Over 400 young people attended, where they received information on degree apprenticeships, labour market intelligence on key growth sectors, North Wales Growth Deal opportunities and employers with graduate roles.

Low Carbon Energy Skills Research

Low Carbon Energy is a major growth area in North Wales. To better understand the sector, Wavehill were commissioned to undertake a skills analysis across the low carbon energy industry in the region. This involved offshore and onshore Wind, Marine energy i.e. tidal, as well as Nuclear including SMR developments and Decommissioning. The project objective was to better understand the skills and job roles required by developers and their supply chain, now and over the next 10 years. Key developers in the region, RWE, Magnox, BP, Cwmni Egino and Morlais steered the direction of the work. The RSP will now work with providers to understand available provision against industry requirements and identify any gaps.

Low Carbon Energy Prospectus and Video

In collaboration with providers in the region, the RSP have developed resources to highlight the excellent educational and training facilities available in North Wales to support the low carbon energy industry as it evolves and grows. The aim was to collate engaging resources which inform and inspire businesses in the low carbon energy industry to establish in North Wales, due to the region's outstanding training facilities for staff.

Young Person's Toolkit

Young people are our future, so it's essential that they feel fully informed about their options. To support decision-making, a young person's toolkit has been developed - bringing together key information that will help them to feel confident when making choices about their future. The toolkit is also a great tool for parents, teachers, career advisors and others. Four key elements have been developed in the toolkit - a young person's skills plan, an animated video summary of the skills plan, written case studies and videos from individuals sharing their thoughts on working in the region.

Digital Skills Research

To better understand the Digital Skills landscape in North Wales, the RSP commissioned research - engaging with organisations of all sizes and across sectors. The purpose was to gain insights into the needs of employers when considering basic and advanced digital skills, tools and technologies, as well as workforce diversity. Tony Venus of ODAG Consulting, carried out the research and presented his findings, report and recommendations, which were approved by the RSP Board and the Digital Dozen. The latter will now take action on the recommendations.

Offshore Energy Alliance Skills Topic champion

Offshore Energy Alliance (OEA) and the RSP united to propel North Wales as a hub for a skilled local supply chain to the growing offshore wind industry. The region's coast is poised for a significant surge in offshore energy initiatives. With Mona, Morgan, and Awel y Môr, wind farms in the pipeline are set to play a pivotal role in the UK's renewable energy landscape. The RSP and OEA collaboration is designed to ensure skills requirements are exceeded.

NORTH WALES CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEE

NORTH WALES CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEE

CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEE

Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) are new regional corporate local government entities with similar powers, duties, governance, and administrative structures to local authorities in Wales.

The Welsh Government regulations came into place in April 2021 and from 30 June 2022 onwards the CJCs were assigned their statutory duties to prepare a Strategic Development Plan and a Regional Transport Plan. In addition, they have a responsibility to enhance and promote the economic well-being of the area.

The North Wales CJC comprises the six Local Authorities in North Wales and the Snowdonia National Park Authority.

This new corporate body will still be known as Ambition North Wales - ensuring we build on our established collaborative work and reputation. The North Wales Corporate Joint Committee will be our legal name.

TRANSFER OF AMBITION NORTH WALES

It has been agreed that the functions of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board will be transferred into the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee. Four independent workstreams will be established for the transfer, these are Legal and Governance; People and HR; Finance, Processes and Systems; and Communications and Engagement.

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

A Strategic Development Plan recognises that planning for an individual local planning authority administrative area does not necessarily reflect how people live their lives, how markets operate or how business functions. Strategic Development Plan's offer the ability to ensure that a wider geographical area is considered in a single plan.

REGIONAL TRANSPORT PLAN

A Regional Transport Plan sets out the policies to achieve an accessible, sustainable, affordable, and integrated transport system for North Wales. Delivery of the plan and its priorities will support the economy to thrive, encourage modal shift away from private car use, and reduce the negative environmental impact of our transport network.

LOCAL AREA ENERGY PLANS

LOCAL AREA ENERGY PLANS AND REGIONAL ENERGY STRATEGY

The Strategic Energy Team have worked closely with the 5 local authorities (with Conwy's plan having already been developed) and consultants ARUP, The Carbon Trust and Afallen to deliver Local Area Energy Plans (LAEP) specific to each Local Authority area.

The Local Area Energy Plan outlines a compelling vision for what a net-zero carbon energy system could look like in 2050 for the local area. Drawing on a robust evidence base developed during the LAEP's creation, an action plan has been produced to drive the transition of the local energy system towards net zero.

Over the last year, our role has been:

- Managing the contract with ARUP, The Carbon Trust and Afallen
- Coordinate and facilitate stakeholder engagement, progress meetings, workshops and focus groups
- Providing a regional perspective to the plans and represent the region in national discussions
- Ensuring alignment between LAEP's, Regional Energy Strategy and National Plans and Policies

The LAEP's are being finalised and presented to each Local Authority during Q1 of 2024/25.

SHARED PROSPERITY FUNDING

SHARED PROSPERITY FUNDING

We secured over £1m of Shared Prosperity Funding to deliver on the following workstreams complimenting Growth Deal delivery:

Skills and Employability

Skills and Employability Portal

Skills and Employability Portal - Development of an online Skills and Employment Portal for North Wales. The portal will acknowledge flagship businesses, provide information about large scale job generating projects, raise awareness of future jobs and opportunities and inspire young people to consider a career within a priority sector.

Energy and Net Zero

Access to Smart Local Energy

A project to supply grants to SMEs, social enterprises and community organisations so they can procure bid writing consultation. The ultimate aim is for the awarded SME's and social enterprises to subsequently access funding through the Growth Deal Smart Local Energy Fund.

Carbon Emissions and Biodiversity

Sharing best practice and delivering training sessions on how climate change considerations should inform business case development.

Benefits and Social Value

Commitments and best practice

Develop an online monitoring platform for social value commitments and share best practice.

Digital

Rural Digital Community Support

Providing support for communities to improve their broadband connectivity.

SME Connectivity Assessments

Providing SMEs with business specific advice and guidance on how they can adopt the latest wireless network technologies to improve productivity and innovation.

Access Agreements

Providing information and support for councils to investigate the feasibility of adopting access agreements to enable use of lighting columns for 4G small cell deployment. The project goal is to supply the councils with the relevant information.

Mobile Coverage Survey

A project to purchase survey equipment to enable the region to assess 4G signal quality independently of network operators' own assessments. The capability will identify areas of need and help in lobbying operators on location specific issues.

POWERED BY LEVELLING UP

TŶ GOBAITH

The team chose Tŷ Gobaith as the chosen charity for the year. Since September the team have been busy raising monies to support the charity.

The team have participated in Dark Runs across the region, hosted a bake sale at Sarn Mynach, and arranged a clothes donation for the charity's Llandudno shop.

Tŷ Gobaith is a centre of excellence for children's palliative care helping children and families with the best care and support when and where they need it.

To date the team have raised an amazing

£1,810

*including a match funding contribution from the Principality Building Society

hope house tŷ gobaith
children's hospices

THE NEXT TWELVE MONTHS

Over the next twelve months our focus, alongside our partners, remains unchanged. We will drive our projects forward to deliver the new jobs and investment that North Wales deserves.

Let us not forget that the Growth Deal is addressing chronic failures in our economy. If these projects were easy to deliver they would have been operational years ago. Solving these failures takes time, it takes patience and it takes resilience from everyone involved. Working collaboratively together, with both Governments and the private sector requires compassion in the way we form partnerships, in the way we lead and inspire teams to overcome the hurdles and deliver these challenging projects together.

Ultimately we are all striving for the same outcome, we want to see North Wales thrive at every level and compete on a global scale. This gives us a chance to retain our talented young people and offer them jobs that can provide them with the standard of living they deserve. This was not on offer when I was a school leaver so I feel very passionate about making a difference for those following in the generations behind me. I left North Wales at the age of 22 and I returned here to work at the age of 43. That's over two decades of my life - arguably the most important of all, spent building my career in Cardiff and London. I am privileged to now be in this role and despite the challenges I will make sure the Growth Deal investment makes a real difference and offers young people the choice I didn't have.

Looking ahead, we have an extremely busy first half of the year with a significant number of business cases expected to be approved including the Former North Wales Hospital, Denbigh project, the Deeside Anaerobic Digestion Plan and the Tourism Talent Network and the Centre for Environmental Biotechnology.

In addition to moving these key projects forward, we are embarking on a significant change which will see the Portfolio Management Office team and the North Wales Growth Deal transfer into the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee. My focus will be firmly on has to be on the successful and smooth transfer of projects but ultimately people into this new Local Government entity. From July 2014, I will move into the role of Chief Executive of the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee and will continue the work to ensure that we meet our statuary duties and produce a Regional Transport Plan, a Strategic Development Plan and do everything possible to promote regional economic wellbeing.

At a personal level, and in the spirit of transparency, this year for me has been the most challenging yet since joining Local Government in 2020. My team, the Ambition North Wales Partnership and wider colleagues who identify as being part of one 'Team North Wales' are an incredible cohort of people who are passionate about making a difference. Together we will navigate through all of the challenges ahead and look forward with wisdom, confidence and enthusiasm about the year ahead.

Alwen Williams
Portfolio Director

OUR PARTNERS

Prifysgol Wrecsam
Wrexham University

£240M OF GROWTH DEAL FUNDING BY